The Inanity and Miſchief of Vulgar Superſtitions.

FOUR SERMONS,

PREACHED AT

ALL-SAINT'S CHURCH, HUNTINGDON,

On the 25th Day of March, in the Years 1792, 1793, 1794, 1795.

BY M. J. NAYLOR, A.M.

FELLOW OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, AND LECTURER AT THE PARISH CHURCH OF WAKEFIELD, YORKSHIRE.

TO WHICH IS ADDED, SOME ACCOUNT OF THE

WITCHES OF WARBOYS.

Superſtitio fuſa per gentes, oppreſſit omnium fere animos, atque hominum imbecillitatem occupavit—Multum et nobis metipſis et noſtris profuturi videbamur, ſi eam funditus ſuſtulisſemus.

CIC. DE DIVIN. l. 2. c. 72.

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M DCC XC V.

TO THE

MAYOR, CORPORATION,

AND

INHABITANTS

OF THE

TOWN OF *HUNTINGDON*,

THESE

SERMONS

ARE RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY THEIR HUMBLE SERVANT,

M. J. NAYLOR.

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PREFACE.

CUSTOM appears to have laid a ſort of embargo upon every publication, however ſmall and inſignificant, unleſs uſhered into the world by ſomething in form of a preface. How then ſhall ſermons, and thoſe too upon the antiquated ſubject of Witchcraft, preſume to obtrude themſelves upon the public without ſuch a precurſor and apologiſt, to tell the cauſe of their appearance, and deprecate the frowns of auſtere criticiſm? Of ſuch a bold infringement of laudable cuſtom, I will not venture

venture to be guilty. Yet, upon the hackneyed plea of the earneſt ſolicitation of friends I will not reſt, however juſtly ſuch a plea might be advanced, but rather acknowledge myſelf actuated by a faint hope, that even this feeble effort, levelled againſt the gloomy gothic manſion of ſuperſtition, may not be entirely without a beneficial effect. Surely the ſmall mite of the poor in knowledge, caſt into the treaſury of truth, is entitled to ſome regard, eſpecially as it may excite the extenſively wiſe and learned to contribute more freely from their ample ſtores. And ſhould the following ſheets be fortunate enough to call up one combatant againſt the odious and miſchievous powers of bigotry and ignorance, my inſignificant labors

bors will be ſufficiently recompenſed.

I am aware that by many, Witchcraft, the principal object of the ſubſequent diſcuſſions, will be deſpiſed and ridiculed as exploded legendary nonſenſe, unworthy even of being ranked with thoſe *pretty* ſtories which divert the nurſery, and amuſe the infant mind. Perhaps a more extenſive acquaintance with the prejudices and ſuperſtitions of the lower orders of the community, might induce them to look upon it as not entirely undeſerving of ſome ſerious regard. Does it not ſhock humanity to ſee the poor, helpleſs, infirm and old, perſecuted with rancorous hatred, for a fancied aſſociation with the infernal powers? Such ſufferers

ſufferers claim our protection and ſupport; ſuch deſtructive, uncharitable notions call for every effort to correct and eradicate them. Many, who have moved only in a ſuperior ſphere, and whoſe minds have been cultivated by a more refined education, muſt undoubtedly deem it almoſt impoſſible for rational beings to believe and defend ſuch abſurdities. Yet ſtrange as it may appear to thoſe, lamentable experience but too clearly proves, how extremely deep theſe notions are ſtill engraven upon the minds of thouſands, notwithſtanding the great advances in learning and knowledge, which have been made within the two laſt centuries. The belief of theſe extravagancies was indeed gradually yielding to the powerful progreſs of

ſcience,

ſcience, but of late it has again been nouriſhed and revivified, in no inconſiderable degree, by the many extraordinary relations, which the late venerable Mr. WESLEY inſerted in his Arminian Magazine. Numbers, accuſtomed to aſcribe to this great man an almoſt Papal infallibility, dared not to reject what he advanced with ſuch an air of earneſtneſs, or to queſtion the truth of what he appeared to ſanction by his authority. Their conviction has inſenſibly ſpread itſelf amongſt the multitudes connected with them by the common intercourſe of ſociety, and once more reillumined the fading flame of vulgar ſuperſtition. Juſtice however to his ſucceſſors in compiling this widely circulated work, obliges me to commend them for having

wiſely deviated from the example of their highly-eſteemed predeceſſor, and forborn to diſgrace their Magazine, by the inſertion of ſuch abominable traſh.

But I ſhall forbear to treſpaſs further upon the reader's patience, and waving general apologies, proceed to mention the peculiar circumſtances which gave riſe to the following Sermons. After the conviction and execution of the three unfortunate *Samuels*, for the diabolical crime of witchcraft,* their goods, which amounted in value to 40l. were forfeited to Sir *Henry Cromwell*, as lord of the manor of *Warboys*. Averſe to taking poſſeſſion of

* For a further account of their *deviliſh* deeds ſee the ſubjoined narrative.

the

the property of *ſuch* felons, he gave all to the corporation of *Huntingdon*, on condition, that they ſhould give 40s. every year to a Doctor or Bachelor in Divinity, of Queen's College, *Cambridge*, to preach a Sermon at All-Saint's church in *Huntingdon*, on the annunciation of the bleſſed Virgin, againſt the ſin of witchcraft, and to teach the people how they ſhould diſcover and fruſtrate the machinations of witches and dealers with evil ſpirits.

The reverend and learned author of the Memoirs of the protectoral houſe of Cromwell, having mentioned this curious and ancient inſtitution, adds the following uncandid reflection: * "It is with real con-

* Vol. I. p. 25, ſecond edition.

" cern that I acquaint the reader,
" that there is ſtill an annual Ser-
" mon preached againſt witchcraft in
" *Huntingdon*, by a divine ſent from
" Queen's College, Cambridge. It
" would be highly commendable in
" the Corporation of Huntingdon,
" and Queen's College in Cambridge,
" to agree, that if a Sermon muſt
" be preached, the ſubject of it
" ſhould, inſtead of being levelled
" againſt the pretended ſin of witch-
" craft, be an addreſs to the people,
" cautioning them againſt falling
" into ſuch errors and prejudices, as
" made their forefathers involve the
" unhappy and immeaſurably injur-
" ed Samuels in ruin and deſtruc-
" tion." Had this laborious gentle-
man proſecuted his inquiries on this
ſubject, with that diligence and ac-
curacy,

curacy, which is the indiſpenſable duty of a rigid narrator of facts, he would have found, that the Society of Queen's were not ſuch ſlaves of ſuperſtition as he ungenerouſly inſinuates. The ſin of witchcraft has long ceaſed to be the theme of their annual diſcourſes, nor has the ſubject ever been mentioned, except to explode, and deprecate the lamentable effects of, ſuch miſerable deluſions.

How far the following "addreſſes to the people" of Huntingdon are entitled to the approbation of the above-mentioned author, or how far they merit the regard of the public, is not for me to determine. Had I formed the leaſt deſign of proſecuting the ſubject ſo extenſively, or of preſenting

preſenting my imperfect labors to the public, when firſt delegated by the Society of Queen's to deliver this annual Lecture, it would have been almoſt unpardonable not to have arranged the whole more methodically, and to have avoided the apparent repetitions which have neceſſarily ariſen from the want of a previous plan. For theſe, and other imperfections, I hope, the indulgent reader will make every allowance, which candour and good nature can ſuggeſt. I dare not be ſo preſumptuous as to lay claim to any originalities. To Dr. WATERLAND, Mr. FARMER, Mr. SHUCKFORD, and various other learned authors, I muſt acknowledge my obligation for almoſt every material obſervation theſe pages contain. If I have ſucceeded

in

in making a compilation which deſerves not the ſevere laſh of the angry critic, I am ſatisfied. And as my hearers were kind enough to expreſs their approbation of theſe Sermons, when delivered from the pulpit, to their countenance and protection, I now again beg leave to recommend them, when iſſuing from the preſs.

SERMON

SERMON I.

1 Sam. xxviii. 8.

And he ſaid, I pray thee Divine unto me by the familiar Spirit, and bring me him up whom I ſhall name unto thee.

WHETHER ſuperſtition or infidelity is the greater enemy to true religion and human happineſs, has been a ſubject of diſpute with the Philoſopher and the Divine. That both are pregnant with moſt pernicious effects, has always been readily acknowledged by the humane and candid obſerver. A ſerious and ſtrenuous endeavour to eradicate either

from the minds of men muſt therefore be a taſk worthy of every one, who has engaged in the important office of inſtructing his brethren. When we add hereto a recollection of that memorable and melancholy event, which has given origin to my addreſſing you this day, ſurely no apology will be thought neceſſary for preſenting you with a few obſervations upon the curious portion of ſacred hiſtory, from which the Text is taken. For myſterious and unimportant as this relation may at firſt view appear, nevertheleſs, if candidly examined, it is capable of affording us much uſeful and appoſite inſtruction.

Saul, after having been raiſed by God to the Throne of Iſrael, had refuſed to obey his voice, and faithfully to execute his commands. Provoked by this diſobedience, the Lord withdrew his favor and protection from him; and now in the decline of life, when ſurrounded by his enemies, and diſtruſting his own ſubjects, he found himſelf abandoned by his God, whom *he* had before preſumptuouſly forſaken.

ſaken. Rouſed by his preſent fears, rather than actuated by any real penitence for his former miſconduct, he wiſhed to obtain ſome inſtruction and direction from above, in an exigency ſo urgent and alarming. By all the various methods he could deviſe, did he attempt to procure an anſwer; but "neither by Dreams, nor by Urim, nor by Prophets,"* would Jehovah vouchſafe to impart the leaſt comfort or inſtruction. Finding himſelf thus rejected and abandoned, Saul, diſtracted by the violence of his diſtreſs, was determined to take a ſtep at once impious and abſurd. Afflicted indeed but not humbled, ſorrowful yet blind to his own wickedneſs, and deaf to the voice of reaſon, he was weak enough to indulge a ſtrange hope, that the Ghoſt of the dead Prophet Samuel might be prevailed upon to liſten to him, though God had deſerted him. Hurried on by deſpair and ſuperſtitious credulity, he haſtily repaired to a woman of Endor, famous for her ſkill in Divination and Necromancy, by whoſe aſſiſtance

* Verſe 6.

he madly expected to call Samuel from the dead.*

Various opinions have been advanced by Commentators reſpecting this tranſaction, you will therefore readily pardon an attempt, to illuſtrate and eſtabliſh that, which appears to me the moſt rational and juſt.

* Then Saul ſaid unto his ſervants "ſeek me a woman that "hath *a familiar ſpirit*, &c." 1 Sam. xxviii. the word OB, which as well as its plural OBOTH, is always rendered by our Tranſlators *familiar Spirit*, literally ſignifies *a Bottle*, (which amongſt the Ancients was formed of Leather, and ſomewhat reſembled a Bladder) and was metaphorically applied to thoſe Perſons, whoſe Bellies, when they delivered their Oracles, were diſtended, like a Bottle. The LXX generally tranſlate theſe words ἐγγαστριμυθους *Ventriloquiſts*; and Iſaiah xix. 3. τους εκ τῆς γῆς φωνοῦντας *thoſe that ſpeak from the Earth.* This extraordinary art, or rather perhaps gift of Nature, as experience has diſcovered, requires not the interference of any evil Spirit. But to ſpeak without moving the Lips, in a voice which ſeemed to proceed from the Belly, or from ſome diſtant quarter, might eaſily impoſe upon the ignorant and ſuperſtitious, and make them readily believe, that theſe reſponſes were really uttered by *that Spirit of Divination or Apollo* (πνεῦμα πυθωνος Acts XVI, 16, 18,) to which they were aſcribed by deſigning Pretenders. Such an impoſtor we may conclude the woman to be, whom Saul conſulted.

Some

Some have thought, that the whole was nothing but a mere trick, by which the artful woman impoſed upon Saul's credulity, making him believe that ſhe really ſaw Samuel, when nothing appeared, and contriving a voice to proceed from ſome ſecret corner, and hold with him the converſation related by the ſacred hiſtorian. But this opinion wears ſuch an air of improbability as renders our aſſent to it rather difficult. For though there can be no reaſon to doubt but that the *good* woman's intentions when ſhe undertook the buſineſs, were to impoſe upon Saul by a feigned anſwer; yet had all been left ſolely to her management, it is highly probable that ſhe would have delivered her Oracle in terms more agreeable to Saul's wiſhes. This was the general practice of Oracle-mongers, which ſhe would have been induced to imitate, both by the fear of offending the King, and endangering her own life, and alſo by the deſire of procuring a more ample reward. But the whole Tenor of Samuel's ſpeech is much too ungrateful and ſolemn, much too true

and

and prophetic to have entirely originated in her invention. How was ſhe able (had ſhe been bold enough) deciſively to declare to him, that the army of Iſrael ſhould be delivered into the hands of the Philiſtines, and that he and his ſons ſhould fall in the field? To know, and to be able, to predict with certainty, events yet ſhut up in the womb of time, is claimed by God as his excluſive privilege. He challenges the fictitious Gods of the idolatrous nations, to give this clear proof of their Divinity; "Produce your cauſe, ſaith the "Lord; bring forth your ſtrong reaſons, "ſaith the King of Jacob; let them bring "them forth, and ſhew us what ſhall hap-"pen; let them ſhew the former things "what they be, that we may conſider "them, and know the latter end of them; "or declare us things for to come; ſhew "the things that are to come hereafter, "that *we may know that ye are Gods.*"* But is it not highly abſurd to imagine, that the Deity would communicate any portion of this knowledge to a deteſtable

* Iſaiah xli. 21, 22, 23.

ſorcereſs,

ſorcereſs, would give her the honour of revealing his counſels, and concur with her in a vile impoſition upon the credulous Saul.*

As there appears, therefore no foundation for the opinion, that all was a mere contrivance of the artful woman, to impoſe upon the ſenſes of her royal conſulter; muſt we not conclude, that there certainly was an apparition, which converſed with Saul?

But the reaſons already advanced againſt its being only a cunningly contrived impoſture, muſt equally ſerve to convice us, that it could not be any familiar or evil ſpirit, conjured up by the infernal power of her ſorceries, to perſonate the dead prophet. For this agent, as well as his

* Should any one however be ſtill inclined, with Dr. Chandler, (Life of David, B. 2. Ch. 16) and other learned men, to conſider the whole traſaction as nothing but an artifice of the cunning Pythoneſs, yet he muſt readily agree with me in the principal concluſion I wiſh to eſtabliſh, that this Hiſtory gives no ſanction whatever to the popular notions concerning the powers of witches.

precious miſtreſs, muſt have been diſpoſed to give an anſwer more agreeable to the inclinations and wiſhes of the diſtreſſed king; and both of them muſt have been equally ignorant of futurity. Preſcience, it has been already obſerved, is the attribute of God alone, and cannot be poſſeſſed by any one, but to whom, and in what degree, he is pleaſed to impart it. And can we ſuppoſe, that he would ever be ſo bountiful to beings continually engaged in labouring to counteract the deſigns of his providence?

But ſince it was neither a ſecret voice contrived by the cunning deceiver, nor an evil ſpirit conjured up by her magic art, which pronounced the dread denunciation againſt the trembling king, it muſt have been Samuel himſelf, who reviſited the earth to be the meſſenger of theſe unwelcome tidings. Was he then called from his reſt by the irreſiſtible power of her incantations? Surely nothing can be more injurious to the perfections of the Almighty, than to ſuppoſe he would permit

mit impious men, nay all the combined powers of darkneſs, to interrupt, even in the ſmalleſt degree, the peaceful reſt of his departed ſervants. Nothing can be more incongruous with reaſon than to imagine, that ceremonies however deviſed, or words however conſtructed and combined, can have any power to reanimate the mouldering duſt, and recal it from the ſilent manſions of the grave.* As ſoon may we expect to ſee ſpacious cities erected, noble foreſts called forth, and lofty mountains removed, by the potent ſound of cabaliſtic words. It muſt therefore be by God's appointment that the departed prophet appeared. He was ſent to bring this ſevere and unwelcome meſſage to Saul, as a rebuke for his preſumption, and a puniſhment for adding to his other ſins this flagrant tranſgreſſion of God's expreſs command.† Nor is ſuch a ſuppoſition repugnant to the divine proceedings in ſimilar circumſtances. When the prophet Balaam practiſed inchant-

* See Farmer on Miracles, chap. iii. ſect. 3.

† Levit. xix. 26 and 31. And xx. 6.

ments, to obtain a favourable anſwer for the Moabites, and a malediction againſt the children of Iſrael, God continually over-ruled him, conſtraining him to pronounce bleſſings inſtead of curſes.* When king Ahaziah ſent to conſult Baalzebub, the god of Ekron, whether he ſhould recover from his ſickneſs, the Lord ſent Elijah to intercept his meſſengers, to reprove the king, and announce the unwelcome news of his certain death.† And ſuch was his interpoſition in the caſe of Saul. Saul came in hopes of obtaining ſome grateful information from Samuel, which he probably would have received from the deſigning pretender to extraordinary powers, if God had not diſappointed both him and her, by ſending the real Samuel to pronounce his awful fiat. Confounded by the unexpected ſeverity of this ſentence, the king fell down in a ſwoon, unable longer to ſuſtain the bitter agonies of his mind.

* Numbers xxiii. and xxiv.

† 2 Kings i.

That

That the woman herſelf was greatly diſappointed and deceived is clearly manifeſt from her behaviour, as ſoon as the apparition preſented itſelf. Conſcious of her own inability to call Samuel from the dead, or to conjure up ſuch an appearance, no ſooner did ſhe ſee him, than ſhe cried out with vehemence.* Struck with ſuch an aſtoniſhing evidence of the divine interpoſition, ſhe immediately concluded, that the king alone could be the perſon who applied to her, and ſhe exclaimed with terror, "Why haſt thou deceived me, for thou art Saul?" †

The ſuppoſition that it was Samuel himſelf who appeared, is alſo plain and natural, and conſonant to the ſtyle and

* The cauſe to which the Jewiſh Rabbins aſcribe her fright is too ſingular and extravagant not to be mentioned: Becauſe, ſay they, he did not appear in the uſual poſture of ghoſts which are conjured up, with his head downwards and feet upwards, but erect as men ſtand when living. (Pool's Synop. in locum.)

Joſephus attributes it to his venerable and majeſtic appearance; θεασάμενον ἄνδρα σεμνον καὶ θεοπρεπῆ ταραττεται. (Lib. 6. ch. 14.)

† Verſe 12.

tenor of the whole narration. Had it only been a perſonated Samuel, or only a familiar aſſuming Samuel's ſhape and deportment, is it not probable, that the ſacred hiſtorian would have given us ſome intimation of it, and not have delivered the whole ſtory preciſely in the ſame terms, as if the real Samuel had himſelf appeared?* The learned author of the book of Eccleſiaſticus was clearly of this opinion. For he ſays, "After his death "he propheſied, and ſhewed the king his "end, and lifted up his voice from the "earth in propheſy, to blot out the "wickedneſs of the people." †

To mention half the great authorities antient and modern, which might be

* The language of the narration is: "And the woman ſaw "Samuel." (ver. 12.) "Samuel ſaid to Saul." (ver. 15.) "Then ſaid Samuel." ver. 16, &c.) "And Saul perceived "that it was Samuel *himſelf*." (ver. 14.) The Engliſh tranſlators, warped by their own preconceived notions, have omitted the word *himſelf*, which ſeems peculiarly directed againſt the vulgar ſuperſtition of the power of witches over ghoſts and ſpectres. (Farmer on Miracles, ch. 4. ſect. 2. p. 490.)

† Ch. xlvi. 20.

quoted

quoted in ſupport of this opinion, would be treſpaſſing too much upon your time and patience, but we muſt not paſs over in ſilence the more weighty objections advanced againſt it.

When Saul aſked the woman, "what ſaweſt thou?"* She anſwered,—"I ſaw Gods *aſcending* out out of the earth."† Now, ſay ſome objectors, the righteous Samuel muſt have been in a better place than the bowels of the earth, and conſequently have rather been diſcovered *deſcending*. This objection, founded entirely upon the vulgar notions concerning the ſituation of the places of future rewards

* Ver. 13.

† Or a God, viz. a perſon bearing the habit and dignity of a Magiſtrate. 'That the word Elohim is applied to Judges and 'Magiſtrates cannot be denied, See Exod. xxii. 8, 9, 28, 'Pſ. lxxxii. 1, 6. Le Clerc and Patrick on 1 Sam. xxviii. 13. 'Dr. Chandler (in his life of David, p. 239) objects to the application of this plural Term to a ſingle perſon; yet this 'Term is applied to Moſes, Exod. vii. 1. And it is certain 'that Saul did not underſtand the witch as ſpeaking of more 'than one perſon, for he aſks, "what is his form?" And ſhe 'explains her own meaning in the anſwer ſhe returns to this 'queſtion:—"An old man ariſeth." (Farmer on Mir. Ch. 4. Sect. 2. p. 489. Note z.)

and

and punishments, is too unimportant to demand much of our attention. For can it be of any great consequence from what quarter Samuel appeared to make his approach? Besides, so sudden and unexpected was this visit, that the woman in her violent alarm might easily be mistaken.*

Again it is objected, the apparition complains to Saul of being *disquieted* by him;† but had it been Samuel no incantations could have effected this, and if God had sent him, he would not have complained. Though Samuel could not be justly dis-

* 'It does not appear that any magic rites were used, or 'that a moments time intervened between Saul's request, and 'Samuel's appearance. The English translators have inserted 'the Particle *when*, ("And when the woman saw Samuel") 'without any authority from the original, and merely to fa-'vor their own Prejudices.' (Farmer on Mir. Ch. 4. Sect. 2, p. 487. Note s.) The passage should therefore be read, (V. 11, 12.) *Saul said, bring me up Samuel. And the woman saw Samuel and cried with a loud voice.*

† V. 15. The judicious and learned Farmer (on Mir. Ch. 4. Sect. 2. p. 492) translates this passage, "why hast thou pro-"voked me to rise up." Thus ascribing his rising up, not to the Pythoness or her magic art, nor strictly and properly to Saul, but rather to the Prophet's indignation against the King.

pleased

pleaſed at being ſent to execute the divine commands, yet as Saul's madneſs and preſumption were the cauſe of his being called from his peaceful abode, did they not deſerve ſevere reprehenſion? And where was the impropriety of reproving Saul, who, though he could not compel Samuel's appearance, was undoubtedly the ſole occaſion of it?

But, ſay our opponents, what reaſon can be given, why God, who had refuſed to anſwer Saul by his more uſual methods, ſhould at laſt declare his will to him by ſuch ſingular and unuſual means?—Many of the diſpenſations of Divine Providence are enveloped in an obſcurity, which our circumſcribed faculties cannot penetrate. That we are unable to give a ſatisfactory reaſon for any extraordinary interpoſition of the Deity, can therefore be no valid argument againſt the fact, if well eſtabliſhed. In this inſtance however, the divine conduct may be accounted for. The Lord refuſed to anſwer Saul, that being thus deſerted, he might be awakened to a conſciouſneſs

ſciouſneſs of his crimes, and led to repentance. But when inſtead of rationally obeying this admonition, he preſumptuouſly broke the law of his God, and applied to the pretended conſulter of familiar ſpirits, the Lord embraced this opportunity of expreſſing his juſt reſentment, and denouncing that vengeance, which though delayed, had not been forgotten. For by this action, Saul had now filled up the meaſure of his guilt, as the Author of the book of Chronicles clearly intimates.* "So Saul died for his tranſgreſſions, "which he committed againſt the Lord, "even againſt the word of the Lord, "which he kept not; and alſo for aſking "counſel of one that had a familiar ſpi-"rit to enquire of it."†

Another moſt material objection is advanced, which indeed would be deciſive,

* 1 Chron. x. 13.

† In the Tranſlation of the lxx. we find a remarkable addition to this Verſe; καὶ ἀπεκρίναϛο αυτω Σαμωὴλ ὁ ϖροφήτης. And Samuel the Prophet anſwered him." May not this be juſtly conſidered as contributing to the ſupport of our Hypotheſis?

if

if once eſtabliſhed; that the predictions of this apparition were not true, and conſequently could not have been delivered by God's meſſenger, Samuel. For though it muſt be acknowledged, that the things foretold did come to paſs in every particular, yet the language of the prediction was, "*to-morrow*, ſhalt thou and thy ſons be with me," though ſome days might probably elapſe afterwards before the battle in Gilboa—As the learned in general agree,* that the word here tranſlated, *to-morrow*, frequently ſignifies, *very ſhortly*, or hereafter, this difficulty is ſoon removed.†

* Univerſal Hiſtory Vol. 4. p. 57. (Note P.)

† This interpretation of the word may be thought to render the whole prophecy ſo vague and indeterminate, as to give it too much the air of an impoſture; nor does there appear any neceſſity for having recourſe to it, if we carefully attend to the circumſtances of the Hiſtory. Saul came to this female diviner by night, and having converſed with Samuel, and taken ſome refreſhment, went away from Endor the ſame night. Gilboa was not ſo far diſtant, as to render it impracticable for him to reach the Camp on the ſucceeding day. The Jews in their computation of time reckoned the day from ſunſet to ſunſet, conſequently the morrow or next day would not commence till after the ſunſetting, which ſucceeded Saul's being at Endor. What therefore ſhould prevent us from concluding, that the prediction, as it ſtands in the common tranſlation, was literally fulfilled?

But another immediately preſents itſelf: Is it not ſaid, "thou and thy ſons ſhall be *with me*?" Was then the wicked Saul to be claſſed after death with the righteous Samuel?—Suppoſing the condition of a future ſtate to be at all alluded to here, might we not with equal propriety aſk; was no diſtinction to be made betwixt the upright, pious Jonathan, and his unjuſt, ungodly father? This expreſſion therefore, *thou and thy ſons ſhall be with me*, probably ſignifies nothing more than this, *thou and thy ſons ſhall like me be numbered among the dead.**

I have now examined and endeavoured to explain this remarkable ſtory, which has ſo often been appealed to as incontrovertible ſcripture authority for the vulgar notions of conjuration and witchcraft. And, I preſume, we are warranted in concluding, from the arguments advanced; that it does not give the leaſt

* By the lxx. this ſentence is tranſlated, "καὶ ἀυριον συ καὶ οἱ "υοι σου μετα σοῦ πεσοῦνται. And to-morrow thou and thy ſons "with thee ſhall be ſlain."

ſupport

ſupport or countenance to ſuch abſurd ſuperſtitions. One great obſtacle is thus removed, which has prevented many from believing, that theſe notions could be deluſive. So far the ſtrong evidence is weakened, which has induced many to do violence to their reaſon, rather than diſbelieve what they imagined was ſupported by unerring revelation. Some other paſſages of ſcripture, which at firſt view appear to ſanction theſe abſurdities, would I am perſuaded, be found, upon a candid examination, inimical to them. Several arguments from reaſon might alſo be advanced to prove ſuch notions utterly void of any real foundation. Though theſe I am at preſent obliged to omit, yet a future day may perhaps afford me an opportunity of conſidering them. And if at laſt ſuch opinions ſhould appear unable to bear the teſt of fair and free inquiry, with what ſorrow muſt we look back upon the fate of thoſe miſerable wretches, who have fallen the lamentable victims of ſuch ſad deluſion?

Profiting however by the example of Saul, let us endeavour to draw an uſeful leſſon from this ſingular part of his hiſtory. Let it teach us, how impoſſible it is to lay any ſcheme of happineſs, unleſs favoured and ſanctioned by God; how dreadful to have ſo far provoked his indignation by our iniquities, as to be forſaken by him in our diſtreſs: how tremendous to have him our enemy, when the awful hour of diſſolution approaches! Let it alſo teach us, how deſirable it is to enjoy his friendſhip and affection: how ineſtimable a bleſſing to have him for our guide and protector, when dangers and difficulties aſſail us! For, "if the Lord is on our ſide, then need we not fear what man can do unto us;" ſecurely ſhielded by his Almighty wings, we may walk even through the valley of the ſhadow of death without trepidation! Conſcious however that nothing but a pious and holy life can ever procure for us this pearl of ineſtimable price, let us make religion our firſt and principal care, as it is our greateſt and moſt important concern. Impreſſed with

a due ſenſe of the high value of this object, let us inſtantly "give diligence to make "our calling and election ſure." And may that being, who is all goodneſs and love, aſſiſt and proſper our humble and ſincere endeavours, ſo that overcoming every difficulty, and triumphing over every oppoſition, we may finally obtain a glorious and everlaſting inheritance with the ſaints in light.

SERMON

SERMON II.

1 TIMOTHY iv. 7.

Refuſe prophane and old Wives Fables.

A Strong predilection for the marvelous and extravagant has always formed a diſtinguiſhed and ſtriking feature in every rude, uncultivated mind. Nor in any age has there been wanting knavery, ever ready and eager to take advantage of credulity and ignorance. Hence have many idle and abſurd ſuperſtitions derived their origin, and been moſt induſtriouſly progagated amongſt the ancient heathen, during that long period of ignorance and idolatry, which inveloped and obumbrated the major part of mankind. Much of this darkneſs has been already diſſipated by

by the pure light of the goſpel, which has received no trifling and inconſiderable aſſiſtance from that ſpirit of rational philoſophy, ſo eminently diſplayed in theſe later ages. But almoſt inconceivable is the difficulty of eradicating a deep-rooted ſuperſtition from the human mind, even though its fallacy and abſurdity be pourtrayed in the ſtrongeſt colours; eſpecially if the error has received the ſanction of remote and *venerable* antiquity. Yet the difficulty of the work ſhould ſtimulate us to redouble our exertions, and not ſink us in deſpair; we ſhould not be diſcouraged from ſowing the ſeed with care and diligence, though the proſpect of reaping the deſired harveſt be diſtant and uncertain. Is not every effort to reſcue mankind from this dreary bondage, how weak and circumſcribed ſoever it be, juſtly entitled to the countenance and ſupport of the candid and benevolent? Deſirous of contributing, even the feebleſt aſſiſtance, towards the advancement of ſo deſirable an event, I have endeavoured, on a former occaſion, to ſhew the inanity of the grand argument,

ment, uſually drawn from the hiſtory of the Witch of Endor, in ſupport of the vulgar notions of magic and witchcraft. My preſent intention is to make a few obſervations upon ſome other portions of ſcripture, which *may* be advanced in defence of theſe abſurdities, in order ſtill farther to expoſe the "baſeleſs fabric" of ſuch ſuperſtitions.

The oppoſition made to Moſes and Aaron by the magicians of Egypt, conſtitutes one of the moſt ſingular occurrences recorded in the pages of ſacred hiſtory. For ſome of the firſt miracles, which the advocates of the choſen race performed, to prove themſelves the delegates of the Almighty, were immediately, imitated by theſe ſervants of Pharaoh. Yet we find them afterwards obliged to deſiſt from the conteſt, and acknowledge themſelves unable to execute others, apparently not more wonderful.

And were miracles really performed in oppoſition to the Sovereign of the Uni-

verſe? Let us carefully examine the principal circumſtances, which accompanied thoſe extraordinary tranſactions, and from thence endeavour to obtain a ſatisfactory anſwer to this important queſtion.

God beheld his peculiar people, the ſeed of Jacob, groaning under the ſevere yoke which the Egyptians had laid upon them, and reſolved to deliver them. For this purpoſe he ſent Moſes and Aaron to Pharaoh, to requeſt that he would let the Iſraelites go three days journey into the wilderneſs, to ſacrifice unto the Lord their God. Satisfied with his own idolatrous religion, the king ſaw no neceſſity for ſuch a ſacrifice, and ſuſpecting it to be only a pretext for getting out of his dominions, he ordered their labour to be increaſed, that they might have no leiſure for forming ſuch dangerous projects. And when, by their officers, they repreſented their grievances to Pharaoh, inſtead of meeting with redreſs, they were inſultingly reproved for their idleneſs and diſaffection. Groaning beneath ſuch oppreſ-

ſion,

ſion, they directed their complaints againſt Moſes and Aaron, as the cauſe of their augmented burdens. In this dilemma Moſes applied to God, who again ſent him and his brother to Pharaoh, to repeat their demand in his name. The king now required of them a miracle, as a proof that they were indeed the delegates of God, and not mere pretending impoſtors. To ſatisfy him Aaron caſt his rod before him upon the ground, which was inſtantly transformed into a ſerpent. Immediately Pharaoh called together the wiſemen and ſorcerers of his court,* to try if

* The magi of antiquity were originally the prieſts of the gods, and the profeſſors of ſcience. They undertook to interpret dreams and prodigies, to foretel future events, and to perform many extraordinary things by the rules of their art, and their deep knowledge of the ſecret powers, and virtues of nature. Their art was built upon the general ſyſtem of Pagan theology, which deified all the powers of nature, and they pretended, by the uſe of proper charms and ceremonies, to be able to render the gods propitious to their deſires. They were frequently applied to by kings, particularly thoſe of Egypt and Babylon, where they flouriſhed moſt, and conſequently poſſeſſed conſiderable weight in the ſtate. To preſerve this influence, they were neceſſarily always ready to ſupply by artifice, whatever they wanted in ability.

Cicero de Divin. Lib. 1. Idem. de nat. Deorum, Lib. 2. Diogen. Laert. Lib. 7. Segm. 136, 137. Plutarch de placitis Philoſ. Lib. 2. c. 3. & aliis locis.

by their ſcience and arts they could perform ſimilar transformations. They attempted and ſucceeded; nor were they leſs fortunate in turning water into blood, and in producing frogs; but bitter diſappointment attended their future endeavours.

At the time of theſe events the Egyptians appear to have made ſome progreſs in arts and learning; they had therefore moſt probably diſcovered ſome of the wonderful operations of nature, which experimental philoſophy diſplays. May we not on this account reaſonably conclude, that there prevailed amongſt them an opinion generally attendant upon the firſt dawnings of knowledge and ſcience; that there are certain arcana or hidden qualities in nature, by means of which many ſurpriſing tranſmutations may be performed. The more enthuſiaſtic of their Philoſophers would readily embrace ſuch a pleaſing deluſion; and the more deſigning would willingly cheriſh a notion, by which their influence and power would be ſo effectually promoted. Is it not probable that it was ſome ſuch an opinion as this,

which

which induced Pharoah to aſſemble the Egyptian Philoſophers,* in order to examine, through their means, whether the works of Moſes were really miraculous, or whether he only took advantage of his extraordinary knowledge of natural arcana,† when he pretended to be directed and aſſiſted by the finger of God. If ſuch were the King's views, need we wonder

* To ſuppoſe that Pharoah ſent for the Magicians to try, whether the God of Iſrael was really more powerful than the Gods of Egypt, and conſequently able to compel him to diſmiſs his people, accords not with the fundamental principles of pagan theology. For though it repreſents the Gods as frequently eſpouſing different parties, ſome being inimical while others are propitious, yet it never encourages it's votaries to expect that one Deity will protect them from the vengeance of another, but rather exhorts them to labour, to appeaſe the angry and adverſe Gods by ſacrifices and ſupplications. Moſes did not appeal to his miracles, as evidences of the ſuperiority of Jehovah over the Egyptian Deities; but as proofs that he alone was God of the Univerſe. And the Magicians did not endeavour to counteract or controul Moſes, but merely to imitate him, that they might thus invalidate the credentials he produced in ſupport of his divine commiſſion. In this light the ſubject is conſidered by Joſephus, Antiq. Jud. Lib. ii. Chap. 13. See alſo Shuckford's Connection, Vol. II. p. 457, &c. &c. Farmer on Mir. Ch. iii. and Ch. iv. Sect. 1.

† Many of the ancients imagined that Prodigies, Divinations, &c. might be procured without the Deity's interpoſition by the uſe of natural means, and by attention to certain diſcipline and rules of Art; as appears from Cic. de Div. Lib. i. and Plutarch, Lib. de defectu Oraculorum.

that

that his heart ſhould be hardened, when he ſaw his own magicians able to imitate the advocates of the Hebrews; or can we deem it ſurpriſing, if, even after *they* gave up the conteſt, he ſhould ſtill feel an inclination to attribute the ſubſequent performances of Moſes to his ſuperior ſkill.

Was there really any occult ſcience, any hidden powers of nature, by which the Magicians were enabled to produce ſuch extraordinary effects without ſupernatural aſſiſtance?—In an age like the preſent, when experimental philoſophy is ſo accurately and extenſively cultivated, no one can for a moment withhold his negative to this queſtion.

Did they play their parts as jugglers and cheats, pretending to do what they did not, and impoſing upon the credulous Pharaoh by Sleight and Artifice?" Would not this have given Moſes and Aaron too good an opportunity of detecting their impoſture, and expoſing them moſt effectually to the King and his attendants? Beſides, if we ſuppoſe them capable of ſubſtituting ſerpents, or blood, or frogs,

frogs, with ſuch adroitneſs, as to exhibit the appearance of a tranſmutation, will it not be difficult to aſſign a ſufficient reaſon, why they were not able to ſubſtitute lice and flies and locuſts with equal ſkill and ability?*

Were

* Since writing and preaching the above Sermon, further reflection upon the ſubject, and attention to the arguments of others (particularly of the late learned and elaborate Mr. Farmer, in his excellent work on miracles) have induced the Author to believe the performances of the Magicians, to be nothing more than the effects of artifice and colluſion. But for ſeveral reaſons he deems it almoſt a duty that the Sermon ſhould appear, as nearly as poſſible, in it's original form, and rather than make ſuch a complete alteration of it, to place in a Note the principal arguments which have cauſed this change in his opinion, referring thoſe who wiſh for further information on the ſubject to the judicious writer above-mentioned. (Ch. 4. Sect. 1.)

To imagine that God himſelf gave unexpected ſucceſs to the Magicians, is it not to make him act in oppoſition to himſelf, working ſome miracles to confront the authority of Moſes, at the ſame time that he was working others to eſtabliſh it? If Jehovah thus required Pharoah to do and not to do the ſame thing, with what juſtice could he afterwards puniſh him ſo ſeverely for refuſing to diſmiſs the Iſraelites?

The appellations by which Moſes deſcribes his oppoſers favour this Hypotheſis. For the words, which our tranſlators have rendered *Sorcerers* and *Magicians*, ſignify rather *Juglers*, who delude the eyes of the ſpectators by ſleight and cunning, and *interpreters*, who undertake to explain things obſcure and difficult

Were they then aſſiſted by any evil Dæmons, who performed at their requeſt what

difficult. (Vid. Buxtorf and Pagnin, in voc. et Johan. Cler. in Gen. xli. 8.)

Theſe Magicians would naturally conclude, that Moſes and Aaron were only profeſſors of the ſame Arts with themſelves, and knowing how ſtrongly the prejudices and intereſt of Pharoah would bias him in their favour, they would not heſitate to contend for the palm of ſuperior ſkill, before ſo partial a judge. Whatever was done by theſe Egyptians, Moſes aſcribes to their *inchantments*, or their *covert Artifices and crafty juglings*, as the words more properly import, (See the comments of B. Kidder, B. Patrick, and Le Clere, on Exod. vii. 11.)

The phraſe made uſe of by him, in deſcribing their performances, does not aſſert a perfect conformity between his own works and theirs, but only a general ſimilarity, or perhaps in its ſtricteſt ſenſe, merely their "*attempting* ſome imitation of "Moſes: for it is uſed even when they failed in their at-"tempt. *They did* SO—to bring forth lice but they could "not." (Ch. viii. 18.)

But why were they not equally ſucceſsful in producing lice, as in their previous feaſts of Dexterity?—In the former inſtances they knew before hand what they were about to undertake,and had time for preparation. Pharaoh did not ſend for them at firſt, till after Aaron's rod had been transformed into a ſerpent, and previous notice had been publicly given of the two prior plagues; (Ch. vii. 15, 17, and viii. 1. 4.) but the execution of the third inſtantly ſucceeded the command; (Ch. viii. 16, 17,) the Magicians had therefore no time for previous contrivance. Beſides, the minuteneſs of the ſubſtances, with which they had to do, rendering them imperceptible

at

what human power was unable to accompliſh?—The author of all things has regulated univerſal nature by fixed and ſettled laws, and the very eſſence of every miracle conſiſts in a violation of theſe laws. But how can their operation be for a moment interrupted by any power leſs than that, which originally conſtituted them? And is it not the height of folly and impiety, to aſcribe ſuch ability to any other being than that infinite God, by whom and in whom all things conſiſt.

But if no aſſiſtant familiar could be able to perform real transformations, might he not preſent ſuch deluſive appearances before the eyes of Pharaoh and his ſubjects, as to make them imagine they ſaw the rods of the magicians changed into ſerpents, frogs produced, and water converted into blood, though no ſuch things were in reality performed?—To exhibit theſe deluſive appearances would be no leſs wonderful, no leſs a breach of the ordinary

at a diſtance, neceſſarily ſubjected them to ſuch near and cloſe inſpection, as made it almoſt impoſſible for the moſt dexterous ſubſtitution to eſcape undetected.

laws of nature, than the abſolute completion of the real miracles. And if we ſuppoſe the performances of the magicians to be mere deceptions of the ſenſes, what arguments can we advance to reſcue the actions of Moſes from a ſimilar imputation? If the works appeared to be performed, the ſpectators could have no certain rules by which they might diſtinguiſh a real miraculous effect from a falſe deluſive appearance.

But if the Egyptian Magicians had no myſtical arts, no pre-conſtructed rules by which they could enſure themſelves ſucceſs, is it not ſurpriſing that they ſhould make any attempts, and ſtill more aſtoniſhing that theſe attempts ſhould prove ſucceſsful?—We have no reaſon to ſuppoſe that the King, when he called them together, entertained any *very* ſanguine expectations, that they would be able to perform the taſk enjoined. We have more authority for concluding that, actuated by a full perſuaſion of the exiſtence of many occult powers in nature, he wiſhed

wiſhed to try what Art could effect, in order to know whether the works of Moſes were the reſult of human ingenuity, or interpoſitions of divine power. What abſurdity is there in imagining, that the Magicians themſelves were not free from ſome tincture of the ſame unfounded notions? The Prieſts of Baal, in the days of Elijah, could have no grounds for thinking that their incantations would draw down the wiſhed for fire from Heaven; yet, incited by enthuſiaſm and rage, they tried every extravagant artifice with aſtoniſhing perſeverance from morning until evening.* Why then might not theſe Egyptians in a ſimilar manner try every fanciful experiment, though perfectly unwarranted in any expectation of ſucceſs, by any thing they had before ſeen. An event, favourable as their moſt ſanguine wiſhes could aſpire to, was beſtowed upon their attempts by the Almighty, for the promoting and accompliſhing his deſigns. One of theſe probably was the adminiſtring occaſion for more and greater miracles, that his choſen people might be

* 1 Kings xviii. 26, &c

impreſſed with a more laſting idea of his power, and be thereby induced to pay a more willing and ſteady obedience to his commands. By means of Pharoah's obſtinacy the Majeſty and Power of Jehovah were without doubt more amply diſplayed. God himſelf declares,* "And in very deed "for this cauſe have I raiſed thee up, for "to ſhew in thee my power, and that my "name may be declared throughout the "earth." The ſucceſs of the Magicians appears to have even exceeded their own expectations: They did not know the extent of their own power, if indeed it be not ridiculous to conceive them endowed with any. For had they proceeded upon certain rules of Art, they would have known before trial what they ought to attempt, and what they would be able to accompliſh. But their unſucceſsful endeavours prove their ignorance in this reſpect; and how little they were ſatisfied with their own performances, is ſufficiently evinced by the readineſs with which they embraced the firſt opportunity, af-

* Exod. Ch. ix. 16.

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forded them by the failure of their attempts, to acknowledge that Moſes was directed and aſſiſted by power from on high.

On a review of the preceding arguments, are we not warranted in concluding,* That the ſage philoſophers of Egypt, who oppoſed the deliverers of Iſrael, were not enabled to perform miracles by the knowledge of any arcana of nature, or by the rules of any dark and occult ſcience; and that the ſurpriſing ſpectacles they exhibited, were not performed by any agency of the inhabitants of the ſpiritual world.

But if the two moſt remarkable relations, which the ſacred writers have tranſmitted to us, do not eſtabliſh thoſe abſurd notions which ſuperſtition has taught, and ignorance believed for ſo many ages, with what hopes can their defenders appeal to ſcripture for their ſupport?

* Whichſoever of the two hypotheſes we adopt.

In the law of Moſes this command is delivered: "There ſhall not be found "among you any one that maketh his ſon "or his daughter to paſs through the fire, "or that uſeth divination, or an obſerver "of times, or an inchanter, or a witch, "or a charmer, or a conſulter with fa-"miliar ſpirits, or a wizzard, or a ne-"cromancer." * Again, "A man or a "woman that hath a familiar ſpirit, or "that is a wizzard, ſhall ſurely be put "to death: they ſhall ſtone them with "ſtones; their blood ſhall be upon them."† And again, "Thou ſhalt not ſuffer a "witch to live." ‡ But, it may be argued, Why ſhould the divinely inſpired legiſlator have enumerated theſe as crimes, and denounced ſuch ſevere puniſhment againſt them, if no one was poſſeſſed of ſuch extraordinary and deteſtable powers? We need not inſiſt upon the deviation from the ſtrict meaning of the original, into which our tranſlators have been drawn by the difference of cuſtoms and opinions, and by their ſtrong preju-

* Deut. xviii. 10, 11. † Lev. xx. 27. ‡ Exod. xxii. 18.

dices

dices in favour of the vulgar errors of their own times.* Setting theſe aſide, a moment's reflection upon the cauſe and intent of the Moſaic inſtitution will ſhew, how little neceſſity there is for us to do violence to reaſon, in complaiſance to the letter of theſe denunciations. God had ſeparated the children of Iſrael from the reſt of mankind, to preſerve amongſt them the knowledge and worſhip of the one Supreme, in the midſt of that deluge of polytheiſm and idolatry, which was wide extending its deſtructive ravages over the face of the globe. Every inſtitution of the law of Moſes was therefore intended for this purpoſe, and directed to the promotion of this deſign, as

* See Le Clerc and Patrick's Com. on the ſeveral texts. Shuckford's Connec. Vol. 2. p. 395. and Scot's Diſcovery upon the reſpective Words.

The tranſlation of the Bible now in uſe, was made at the particular requeſt of James the Firſt, who, a few years before, had written his book on *Dæmonologie*. We cannot help acceeding to the opinion of Dr. Hutchinſon, who imagines, that the tranſlators were induced to adopt phraſes favourable to the vulgar ſuperſtitions, by their Reverence for the *profound* learning and judgment of their Sovereign. Hutch. on Witchcraft, ch. 14. p. 225.

its primary object. God did not wiſh to make them a nation of enlightened and accurate philoſophers, nor did he endeavour to correct one ſpeculative principle, which did not neceſſarily beget immoral and idolatrous actions. The Iſraelites were juſt come up out of Egypt, where they had imbibed a ſtrong propenſity for thoſe ſuperſtitious notions and practices, to which that country was ſo remarkably enſlaved. Attachment to theſe neceſſarily drew along with it a degree of affection for thoſe idolatrous rites, with which many of them were ſo cloſely connected, as to render their ſeparate exiſtence impoſſible. Theſe ſuperſtitious obſervances were therefore puniſhed with this exemplary ſeverity, in order to block up this inlet to idolatry, and to preſerve the choſen ſeed of Jacob from going aſtray after ſtrange gods. Accordingly we find all theſe offences ranked in the ſame claſs with the deteſtable ſacrifice of their children, offered by the worſhippers of Molock to that horrid idol. Amongſt a nation

tion ſo ready to give credit to their pretenſions, there muſt always be found deſigning men, who would arrogate to themſelves extraordinary powers. Theſe muſt neceſſarily be conſidered as infamous ſeducers of the people, as men who were erecting the ſtandard of rebellion againſt their ſovereign, and throwing down the altars of their god. For, by the covenant made with the children of Iſrael, Jehovah was conſtituted both their God and King. Conſiſtently therefore with the whole tenor of this inſtitution, all theſe pretenders to ſupernatural qualifications were as juſtly puniſhed, as if abſolutely poſſeſſed of the attributes they claimed.

Such is the ſupport which the ſacred writings afford to the ſuperſtitious belief of more than human powers, in reputed witches and converſers with familiar ſpirits. If reaſon be conſulted, every light it affords ſerves ſtrongly to point out the folly and extravagance of the notion. In ſpite then of the general reception, which

this once favourite opinion has met with in the days of ancient ignorance, it may be deſervedly claſſed amongſt thoſe "pro-" phane and old wives fables," which the apoſtle exhorts us to reject, as inimical to the pure religion of the goſpel.

Is it not a lamentable reflection, that for ages theſe abſurdities ſhould have been cheriſhed with the greateſt care, as valuable truths; and that many innocent creatures ſhould have fallen victims to the general bigottry and madneſs? But how far more ſhocking to obſerve, that many of thoſe, who were peculiarly called by their ſituation to labour for the inſtruction and enlightening of mankind, have ever been the moſt zealous defenders of error and abſurdity? But let *us* profit by their example, and ſtrenuouſly endeavour each in his proper ſphere to diſpel the miſts of ignorance and ſuperſtition from the minds of thoſe around us, ſenſible that the removal of any fooliſh error is one ſtep towards eſtabliſhing true and pure religion upon a firm

firm and ſold baſis. And let us not only diſcountenance and refuſe every prophane and old wives fable; but attending to the ſubſequent advice of the apoſtle, "Let "us diligently exerciſe ourſelves unto "godlineſs; for godlineſs is profitable "unto all things, having promiſe of the "life that now is, and of that which is "to come."*

* 1 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

SERMON

SERMON III.

ECCLES. i. 9.

There is no new Thing under the Sun.

TO trace this memorable obſervation of the wiſe preacher through its full extent, to examine its juſtice, and diſplay its truth, is a taſk I ſhall at preſent decline. It is my intention to conſider the text ſolely with reference to that one ſubject, which the peculiar circumſtances of the day more immediately recommend to our conſideration. Having, on the preceding occaſions, examined the two moſt extraordinary narratives, and alſo other paſſages of the Old Teſtament, with a view to ſubſtantiate

tiate this propoſition; that the ſacred authors give no ſupport or countenance to the vulgarly received notions of witchcraft, I ſhall now endeavour to ſhew, that theſe cannot have received in more recent times any ſufficient and incontrovertible ſanction. God from the beginning has bound univerſal nature by fixed and permanent laws, nor has he ever ſuffered them to be for a moment interrupted or ſuſpended by any created being in oppoſition to his will. The power of working miracles he has reſerved to himſelf alone, and to this have his favoured meſſengers always appealed, as the peculiar and indiſputable evidence of his interpoſition. The moſt remote ages furniſh us with examples of pretenders to extraordinary powers, who impoſed upon the credulity and ignorance of the undiſcerning; and the boaſted abilities of more modern times have been equally the offspring of ſuperſtition and knavery. For in this reſpect, "there is no new thing under the ſun."

The

The powers of man have increaſed, and may probably yet increaſe beyond what we at preſent can conceive, by the increaſed knowledge of the efficacy of natural cauſes; yet it is impoſſible for theſe cauſes, though under the moſt ſkilful direction, ever to produce miracles, or effects repugnant to the ſettled laws of the univerſe. That any human being is, or ever can be, able by his own unaided power in the ſmalleſt degree to interrupt the regular courſe of nature, none, I imagine, will be found hardy enough to maintain. All modern advocates for vulgar miracles, are therefore obliged to have recourſe to the agency of more potent ſpiritual beings, who have covenanted to ſubmit themſelves to the commands of feeble mortals.* To point out an adequate reaſon for their entering into ſuch a compact, would require more than common ſagacity; and admitting the agreement to exiſt, what evidence have we of their ability to perform their part of the extravagant engagement?

* King James's Dæmonologie, Book 2. ch. 2. Bodin des Sorciers, lib. 1. ch. 2. Scot's Diſcovery, book 3. ch. 1.

If

If we apply to reaſon, what information does ſhe afford us? Reaſon points out to us, but one omnipotent Being, who is capable of acting every where, and in what manner ſoever he pleaſes, whoſe omnipotence is the only adequate cauſe we can diſcover of every miraculous effect. That there are created beings ſuperior to man ſeems highly probable, but the exact extent of their power, reaſon cannot diſcover; that they are confined to their own proper ſphere of action, appears moſt agreeable to the general œconomy of nature. The cloſe connection between the different orders of beings, in this ſyſtem of ours, does not prove any neceſſary communication between the inhabitants of other ſyſtems, and this lower world: Nor can we argue from our mutual dependence upon each other, that they have any more power over us than we have over them. It is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that ſpiritual beings have powers ſuperior to thoſe of men; but we cannot juſtly conclude from thence, that this material world is equally ſubject to their influence.

The

The general idea we form of them is, that they are void of ſolidity. Then how can they act upon matter by impulſe, or what neceſſary connection can we diſcern between their volition and the motion of material beings? * Is it not inconſiſtent alſo with the goodneſs of God, that he ſhould ſuffer the laws of nature to be controuled at the will of any created being? For then the harmony and regularity of both the natural and moral world muſt ſoon be confounded, and conſequently the deſigns of infinite power and wiſdom for the benefit of his creatures, be completely defeated. Beſides, experience does not afford us any ſatisfactory proofs that they at preſent do, or ever have performed miracles in this lower world. †

If we conſult revelation, does it aſcribe to them any ſuch faculties?—The bleſſed

* The late Dr. Iſaac Watts has treated this ſubject, with his uſual ingenuity and acuteneſs, in his Philoſophical Eſſays on various ſubjects, Eſſay 6th.

† See more on this ſubject in Farmer on Miracles, ch. 2. Dr. Douglas's Criterion, and Dr. Hutchinſon on Witchcraft.

angels are repreſented as God's miniſters, delivering no meſſages to man but what they firſt receive from him, and never interfering in the affairs of our ſyſtem, but in obedience to his expreſs commands. For " they are all miniſtering ſpirits do- " ing his commandments, and hearken- " ing unto the voice of his words."* And if good angelic beings, who enjoy the approbation and favour of their Creator, have no power of working miracles at their pleaſure, no dominion over mankind, is it not folly to imagine thoſe capable of ſuch wonderful exertions, who by their tranſgreſſions have incurred the divine diſpleaſure? God has not enlarged their powers in reward of their diſobedience, but " has caſt them down into hell; and " reſerved them in everlaſting chains, † " under darkneſs, unto the judgment of

* Gen. xix. 13. Pſ. ciii. 20, 21. Iſ. vi. 1, &c. Dan. viii. 15, 16. Heb. i. 14. and Ch. ii. 5. Rev. xix. 10.

† Into Tartarus (ταρταρωσας) How much ſoever we may be at a loſs to form a preciſe idea of the place here referred to, we cannot reaſonably imagine it to be their kingdom, but rather their everlaſting priſon.

the

" the great day." * " The ſcripture " never aſcribes to the devil the ability of " revealing ſecrets, foretelling future " events, or working miracles; never " guards mankind againſt being deceived " by the outward effects of his miracu- " lous power or inſpiration; neceſſary as " ſuch a caution would have been, had he " been able to inſpire prophecies, and to " work miracles; and earneſtly as it " warns againſt a leſs danger, the pre- " tences of men to divine miracles and " inſpiration, when they are not ſent and " aſſiſted by God." † In ſhort, in almoſt every page of the ſacred volume is this important truth inculcated; That " Je-

* 2 Pet. ii. 4. Jude 6. The commonly received interpretation of theſe paſſages has been adhered to, as the only one which affords any ſupport to the notion, that evil ſpirits ever interfere in terreſtrial affairs. But it would be diſingenuous not to acknowledge my aſſent to the opinion of thoſe who contend, that by the ἀγγελοι here mentioned, the apoſtles did not mean *evil ſpiritual beings*, who rebelled in heaven againſt their almighty Sovereign; but rather the *meſſengers*, who, being ſent from the camp of Iſrael to view the land of Canaan, " brought up an evil report of the land," thus ſeducing the people to murmur againſt Jehovah, and diſtruſt his promiſes.

† Farmer on Mir. ch. 3. ſect. 1. p. 153.

" hovah he is God in heaven above, and " upon the earth beneath, there is none " elſe;" and " he only doeth wondrous " things?" *

But, admitting that any created being is at liberty to controul the courſe of nature, without the expreſs authority and commiſſion of the Almighty, what rule can we have for diſtinguiſhing between the wonderful works of theſe petty rulers, and the interpoſitions of the Supreme? They are both alike appeals to our ſenſes, both equally ſurpaſs our conceptions; and are both entitled to equal regard. Behold, then the dreadful conſequences! Thoſe miracles, to which we are accuſtomed to appeal as infallible evidences of the truth, *may* have been exhibited in ſupport of pernicious error; nor can we prove that Moſes was not a lying prophet, and Jeſus Chriſt a vile profligate impoſtor.

* Deut. iv. 39. Pſ. lxxii. 19. compare 2 Sam. vii. 22. Pſ. lxxxvi. 10. cxxxix. 1—12. Iſ. xlv. 5, 6, 7, 18, 21, 22. Ch. xliii. 10—13. Jer. xxxi. 35.

Farmer on Miracles, ch. 3. ſect. 5.

Is it not impious to imagine that God hath left his creatures ſo open to be ſeduced by every lying vanity, ſo liable to fall into the ſnare of every wicked deeiver? Beſides, the very foundation of filial reverence and pious obedience, towards our eternal Father and King, muſt be entirely overwhelmed. For if any other beings can ſuſpend the laws and diſturb the order of the univerſe, is it not incumbent upon us to worſhip them, to appeaſe their wrath and obtain their favor? And upon what can God found his claim to our excluſive homage? Has not ſuch an opinion been in all ages fatal to true piety, has it not given birth to an endleſs train of ancient pagan idolatries, and modern antichriſtian ſuperſtitions? But if thoſe extraordinary performances, which vulgal credulity believes and ignorance too generally records and trembles at, are found to exceed the capacities of created beings, muſt not all ſuch idle ſtories be void of any real foundation? For ſurely it is moſt impious to ſuppoſe, that God himſelf can ever interfere in an unuſual manner,

ner, merely to gratify the wanton caprice or angry reſentment of a weak, if not a wicked child of mortality.

If we had no other reaſon for doubting the truth of thoſe ſtories, which the abettors of witchcraft propagate, our faith muſt certainly receive a violent ſhock, by only conſidering to whom theſe unuſual faculties are in general aſcribed. To wretches bending beneath the load of years and infirmities, too often oppreſſed by the additional burden of pinching poverty, and in their appearance remarkable for nothing but the diſtreſſing ſpectacle of ſqualid miſery which they exhibit. Had the Devil or his ſubjects the powers aſcribed to them, and had witches authority to command and direct their efforts, they would ſurely firſt of all require relief from their diſtreſſes, if not a plentiful ſupply of every article of terreſtrial luxury and enjoyment. Is it not abſurd to imagine, that any one ſhould enter into a compact with the Prince of darkneſs, to do his errands of miſchief, without receiving any

any better return for their labours, than poverty here and miſery hereafter? It is certainly not enough that they ſhould ſometimes make nightly excurſions to ſome diſtant region, there to revel upon imaginary dainties;* dainties imaginary as their renowned witchcrafts, which only have exiſtence in the idle fears of the credulous, and the diſeaſed imagination of the melancholy Hypocondriac.†

Againſt ſuch ſtrong reaſoning, what do the advocates of thoſe groſs ſuperſtitions oppoſe? A tedious train of abſurd or fanciful facts. If any fooliſh experiment has appeared to be attended by the expected event, how often has it been conſtrued into undeniable ocular demonſtration of guilt? If a poor creature, irritated by the inſulting petulancy of ſome inſolent and unfeeling wretches, and unable through

* Dr. Hutchinſon on Witchcraft, Ch. 13. p. 211.

† For an account of the extravagances which authors have gravely related, concerning theſe meetings of witches, and concerning their Sabbaths, we refer the curious to Bodin de Sorciers, Liv. 2. Chap. 4. 5. Scot's Diſcovery, Book 3. Ch. 2. 3. King James Dœmonologie, Book 2. Chap. 3.

infirmity

infirmity or want, to obtain more ſubſtantial redreſs, has been driven to vent the paſſion of her ſoul in imprecations, and ſome misfortune has ſoon afterwards happened to any of them, this has frequently been received as incontrovertible proof of her diabolical machinations. If any one, poſſeſſing an imagination crowded with notions of witchcraft, has had the misfortune to be afflicted with any unuſual diſorder, how ſtrongly has he been inclined to attribute it to the agency of ſome aſſociate of the infernal powers? Let this imagination once acquire firm root in the mind, and in vain will you endeavour to eradicate it by the force of reaſon. Soon does memory, from the recollection of ſome peeviſh altercation, furniſh an object of ſuſpicion, and from that moment every action is viewed through a falſe medium: occurrences otherwiſe indifferent now aſſume the form of preſumptions, and fancied evidences are tortured into undeniable proofs. Thus upon pretexts the moſt frivolous and abſurd, has the peace, nay too often the lives of our fellow-creatures

been

been ſacrificed. Frequently has intereſted knavery thrown an indelible ſtigma upon innocence, and ſometimes purſued its poor devoted victim even to deſtruction.

But one difficulty, may our adverſaries triumphantly ſay, yet remains unremoved. Did not many confeſs their guilt? Have there not been numerous inſtances of thoſe who have openly acknowledged their abominable witchcrafts, and impious league with the Dæmons of darkneſs? With ſorrow, not unmingled with ſhame, do I confeſs that the number of ſuch has indeed been conſiderable. Alas! poor human nature, how frail, how imperfect are all thy vaunted excellencies! How do I abaſhed, behold thine honour levelled in the duſt! What poignant grief muſt ariſe in the breaſt of the humane, when contemplating the effects of an imagination diſordered and depreſſed by melancholy! It has exalted poor inſane wretches in their own idea to royal and imperial dignity, and cauſed ſome even to arrogate to themſelves the ſublime title of the Meſ-

ſiah:* others it has depreſſed beneath humanity, while they have conſidered themſelves as brutes, inanimate bodies, or beings compoſed of glaſs. But if a diſeaſed fancy can work ſuch ſtrange and deplorable effects, can we be at all ſurpriſed, that perſons whoſe imaginations had long brooded over the notions of witches and witchcraft, ſhould acquire a full conviction that they were themſelves poſſeſſed of ſuch extravagant powers? This falſe aſſociation being once completely formed, it would make the ſame impreſſion upon the mind, as if it were perfectly true. How eaſily then, would they be perſuaded, that they had performed ſuch acts as their imagined qualifications enabled them to do, and how readily would they acknowledge them? And why ſhould it excite our aſtoniſhment that many miſerable creatures, harraſſed by importunities and overcome by diſgraceful and iniquitous

* There is no neceſſity for an elaborate reſearch into hiſtory to prove the ſtrong effects of a diſordered imagination, when our own times furniſh us with a Richard Brothers and his ſerious ſupporters.

tortures,

tortures, have been reduced to the confeſſion of crimes, which they never could be able to commit.*

But if theſe ſuperſtitious notions are falſe and groundleſs, whence had they their firſt origin, and how did they acquire ſuch deep root in the minds of men? —When we conſider that theſe opinions firſt ſprang up in the dark ages of heathen antiquity, of which ſcarce any record has ſurvived the ravages of time, we muſt acknowledge this to be a queſtion of ſome difficulty; yet a little reflection may perhaps afford us ſomething like a ſatisfactory anſwer. Fear is one of the ſtrongeſt paſſions of the human mind, and capable of preſerving the moſt complete and permanent influence over it. Upon this baſis all the idolatrous rites of the ancient Pagan nations appear to have been erected; all their religious cere-

* Will not all theſe confeſſions be invalidated by applying to them this excellent rule, Confeſſio rei impoſſibilis non eſt confeſſio ſanæ mentis; the confeſſion of an impoſſibility is not the confeſſion of a ſound mind?

monies being intended to deprecate the anger, rather than merit the favor of their Gods. This ſlaviſh fear was encouraged by the crafty prieſts, becauſe it gave them a more unlimited influence over the people; and connived at by the civil rulers, becauſe it diſpoſed the ſubject to ſubmit more tamely to abſolute tyranny. The former, as engaged in the immediate ſervice of the Gods, claimed the privilege of a more intimate and familiar acquaintance with them, which claim the people might be induced to acquieſce in by ſome remaining tradition of God's intercourſe with the firſt patriarchs. On this foundation they built their pretenſions to divination and other extraordinary performances. By a monopoly of the little learning of their times, and the help of numerous impoſtors and juggling tricks, they maintained their own and the reputation of their Gods. The *ſacred* profeſſors of theſe arts generally met with protection and encouragement from the ſtate, on account of their important ſervices to thoſe in power; but inferior pretenders, who, wiſhing

wiſhing to prey upon the weakneſs and errors of their fellows, made large additions to the idle tales, by which the credulous multitude was amuſed and miſled, were publicly condemned in almoſt every nation without being exterminated.* By theſe means ſuperſtition was heaped upon ſuperſtition, till at laſt that immenſe fabric of abſurdities was raiſed, which has ſo long held the ignorant in bondage, and which as yet time has not been able to deſtroy.

The apoſtle Paul has warned us againſt giving credit to ſuch "profligate venders of lies." "Now the Spirit ſpeaketh ex- "preſsly, that in the latter times ſome "ſhall depart from the faith, giving heed

* Tacitus calls theſe, Genus hominum potentibus infidum, ſperantibus fallax, quod in civitate noſtra vetabitur ſemper et retinebitur. Hiſt. Lib. 1. Jamblichus, in his treatiſe upon the myſteries of the Ægyptians, Chaldæans and Aſſyrians, gives us reaſon to conclude, that the jealous Prieſts, ſtigmatiſed theſe intruders into their province as men rejected by the Gods, and abandoned to the ſociety of evil Dæmons, by which connexion they became like their aſſociates, full of malice and miſchief.

"to

" to ſeducing ſpirits and doctrines of de-
" vils;* ſpeaking lies in hypocriſy," or rather, *thro' the hypocriſy of liars*, who ſtrive to ſupport their deadly errors† by falſe legendary miracles, whom every pious chriſtian ſhould avoid as men " who " having their conſciences ſeared with an " hot iron."‡

All ſuch notions appear to have been treated by the firſt propagators of chriſtianity as wicked fables; and in one of the early chriſtian councils at the city of Ancyra they received a ſevere cenſure, and the believers of them were con-

* δαιμονιων, of Dæmons, that is, the ſouls of men deifyed after death.

† Of the divinity and worſhip of dead men *(canoniſed ſaints)* aſcribing to them the power of working miracles, and making them a ſort of mediators between God and men; an impious abſurdity which had its origin with the pagan Prieſts and Philoſophers, who aſcribed to ſuch Dæmons the immediate inſpection and government of this lower world. Plutarch de defectu Orac. Plato in Sympos. Apuleius (de deo Socrat.) ſays, Cuncta cæleſtium voluntate, numine et auctoritate, ſed dæmonum obſequio et opera et miniſterio fieri arbitrandum eſt.

‡ 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2,

demned

demned as infidels and worſe than pagans.* Nevertheleſs, when heathen philoſophy began to be grafted upon chriſtianity, the purity

* This council, holden in the year 314 at Ancyra, the metropolis of the province of Galatia, was compoſed of 18 biſhops, from whoſe decrees the following curious extract is recommended to the peruſal of our readers: Illud etiam non eſt omittendum, quod quædam ſceleratæ mulieres, retro poſt ſatanam converſæ, dæmonum illuſionibus & phantasmatibus ſubductæ, credunt et profitentur ſe nocturnis horis cum Diana paganorum dea, vel cum Herodiade & innumera multitudine mulierum, equitare ſuper quaſdam beſtias, & multa terrarum ſpatia intempeſtæ noctis ſpatio pertranſire, ejuſque juſſionibus velut dominæ obedire, & certis noctibus ad ejus ſervitium evocari. Sed utinam hæ ſolæ in ſua perfidia periiſſent, et non multos ſecum in infidelitatis interitum pertraxiſſent. Nam innumera multitudo, hac falſa opinione decepta, hæc vera eſſe credit, et credendo a recta fide deviat, et in errore paganorum revolvitur, cum aliquid divinitatis aut numinis extra unum Deum arbitratur &c. Omnibus itaque publice annuntiandum eſt, quod qui talia et his ſimilia credit, fidem perdit. Et qui fidem rectam in domino non habet, hic non eſt ejus, ſed illius in quem credit, id eſt, Diaboli. Nam de Domino noſtro ſcriptum eſt; Omnia per ipſum facta ſunt. Quiſquis ergo credit poſſe fieri aliquam creaturam, aut in melius aut in deterius immutari, aut transformari in aliam ſpeciem vel ſimilitudinem, niſi ab ipſo creatore, qui omnia fecit, & per quem omnia facta ſunt proculdubio infidelis eſt & pagano deterior. (Concil. general. per Binnium, tom. 1. p. 275.) This alſo ought not to be omitted, that certain wicked women, led aſtray after Satan, and ſeduced by the deceptions and deluſions of Dæmons, believe and profeſs that they ride in the night upon certain beaſts with the heathen goddeſs Diana, with Herodias and women without number, and travel over an immenſe tract of country; that they obey her

purity of the goſpel became contaminated, and the innocence and integrity of it's teachers corrupted. Ignorance again ſpread it's dominion far and wide, and the chriſtian prieſthood, forſaking the ſteps of their divine maſter, deviated into the paths of their idolatrous predeceſſors. Like them they ſtrove to eſtabliſh their empire over the minds of the people: inſtead therefore of labouring to extirpate, they continued to nouriſh thoſe abſurdities, which paganiſm had bequeathed to

her commands as their miſtreſs, and on particular nights are called out to wait upon her. But it would be well if they periſhed alone in their perfidy, and did not draw many along with them into the ſame deſtructive abyſs of infidelity. For a vaſt multitude, deceived by this falſe notion, believe theſe things, and by ſo believing fall from the true faith, and relapſe into the error of Paganiſm, when they ſuppoſe that there does exiſt any ſpecies of divinity or deity beſides the one Supreme God.—It is therefore neceſſary to declare unto all, that whoſoever believes ſuch things forſakes the faith. And he that poſſeſſes not the true faith in the Lord, is none of his, but rather his, in whom he believes, that is, the Devil's. For it is written concerning our Lord, all things were made by him; whoſoever therefore believes that any creature can be made, or even altered for the better or the worſe, or ſuffer any transformation in ſpecies or appearance, except by the Creator himſelf, who made all things, and by whom all things were created, he without doubt is an infidel, and worſe than a pagan.

mankind.

mankind.* They attributed a power of working miracles, to evil angels, whom they conſidered as the real objects of ancient heathen worſhip, and perſecuted their fancied human aſſociates as enemies of God. With what injuſtice and inhumanity this proceſs was conducted, the edicts of the Popes and the acts of the inquiſitors ſufficiently teſtify.† To the united force

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* The various ſects of Gnoſtics early introduced into the chriſtian world the old heathen doctrine of the two principles, the good and the evil; Manes or Manichæus grafted upon chriſtianity a large portion of the Perſian mythology, and his opinions were in a great meaſure embraced by Priſcillian and his followers. The council of Bracara in Spain, holden in the year 563, cenſured theſe extravagant notions concerning the power of the Devil or evil principle. In one of their decrees, they anathematiſed all thoſe who believe the Devil can make any creature, or ſo much as raiſe ſtorms and tempeſts by his own authority. Si quis credit, quod aliquantas in mundo creaturas Diabolus fecerit, & tonitrua & fulgura & tempeſtates & ſiccitates ipſe Diabolus ſua auctoritate faciat, ſicut Priſcillianus dixit, anathema ſit. Nevertheleſs many of theſe abſurd notions gained ground in the ſucceeding ages of ignorance and degeneracy, and became the baſis of all thoſe extravagant ſuperſtitions, which afterwards received the ſanction of the higheſt eccleſiaſtical authority.

† Popiſh ignorance and ſuperſtition having now attained the zenith of their power, Pope Innocent VIII. in the year 1484, iſſued

of ſuperſtition and knavery, multitudes fell a lamentable ſacrifice. This intolrant fury was gradually checked by the advancement

iſſued his memorable bull, directed to the Inquiſitors of Almain, &c. empowering them to ſearch out and cauſe to be burnt, all ſuch as were guilty of the *hereſy* of witchcraft. The tenor of this bull will beſt appear from a ſhort extract: Innocentius Epiſcopus, Servus Servorum Dei, &c. Sane nuper ad noſtrum non ſine ingenti moleſtia pervenit auditum, quod in nonnullis partibus Alemannæ, &c. complures utriuſque ſexus perſonæ, a fide catholica deviantes, cum Dæmonis, Incubis & Succubis abuti, ac ſuis incantationibus, carminibus & conjurationibus, aliiſque nephandis ſuperſtitionibus & ſortilegiis, exceſſibus, criminibus & delictis, mulierum partus, animalium fœtus, terræ fruges, vinearum uvas & arborum fructus, necnon homines, mulieres, pecora, pecudes & alia diverſorum generum animalia, vineas, quoque pomaria, prata, paſcua, blada, frumenta & alia terræ legumina perire, ſuffocari & extingui, facere & procurare, ipſosque homines, mulieres, jumenta, pecora, pecudes, diris tam intrinſecis quam extrinſecis doloribus & tormentis afficere & excruciare, ac eoſdem homines ne gignere, and mulieres ne concipere, viroſque ne uxoribus, et mulieres ne viris actus conjugales reddere valeant, impedire. Fidem præterea ipſam, &c. abnegare, &c. Nos igitur, &c. auctoritate Apoſtolica tenore præſentium ſtatuimus, &c. hujuſmodi inquiſitionis officium exequi, ipſaſque perſonas, quas in præmiſſis culpabiles repererint, juxta eorum demerita corrigere, incarcerare, punire & mulctare, &c. invocato ad hoc, ſi opus fuerit, auxilio brachii ſecularis. (vid. Jac. Sprenger, Malleum Malef.—Barth. Spin. de ſtrigibus, c. 3.) Innocent, biſhop, a ſervant of the ſervants of God, &c. We have heard not without great ſorrow, that in many parts of Almain, &c.

great

advancement of learning, and the reformation of religious error, till at length a final period has happily been put to ſuch abo-

 minable

great numbers of both ſexes, forſaking the catholic faith, abuſe their own bodies with devils of both ſexes; and with inchantments, charms, conjurations, and other wicked ſuperſtitions and ſorceries, exceſſes and crimes, deſtroy and cauſe to be extinguiſhed, the births of women, the fœtuſes of cattle, the fruits of the ground and of the trees, and even men, women, cattle and other kinds of animals; they blaſt vines, fruit-trees, paſtures, corn-fields, and other productions of the earth; they afflict and torment men, women, cattle and other animals with dreadful internal and external pains and tortures, and deprive men and women of the powers of procreation, &c. They alſo renounce the faith, &c. We therefore, &c. by our Apoſtolical authority, appoint by theſe preſents, &c. to execute the office of inquiſition, and to correct, impriſon, puniſh, fine, &c. according to their demerits, thoſe perſons whom they ſhall find guilty of the crimes aforeſaid, &c. calling in for this purpoſe, if it be neceſſary, the aſſiſtance of the ſecular arm.

The idle ſuperſtitions of witchcraft being thus methodiſed and ſanctioned by the infallible head of the church, the fury of eccleſiaſtical perſecution was now let looſe againſt all the fancied aſſociates of the dæmoniacal powers, and extended its horrid ravages over countries conſecrated to the Prince of Benevolence and Peace. In the year after the promulgation of this bull, the inquiſitor Cumanus burnt 41 poor women for witches, in the country of Burlia. (H. Inſtit. p. 105.) And Aliciat in his Parerga ſays, that one inquiſitor burnt 100 in Piedmont, and proceeded daily to burn more till the people roſe againſt him and chaſed him out of the country. A few

years

minable public ſacrifices, though the torch of private perſecution, is too often lighted at the yet remaining embers of ſuperſtitious credulity.

May true knowledge ſpread abroad its benign, its virtuous influence, till every foolish ſuperſtition, every antichriſtian bigotry is totally eradicated from the mind of man. And let us labour with all our powers to haſten this deſirable event; yet, contemplating the great miſtakes which others have

years afterwards, more than 500 (ſays the Jeſuit Delrio in his preface, p.3.) were executed in the city of Geneva, in the ſpace of three months. In the year 1524, 1000 were burnt in the dioceſe of Cumo, and 100 per ann. for ſeveral years together, (Barth. Spin. cap. 12.) Many more inſtances of theſe ſuperſtitious cruelties are given by Dr. Hutch, ch. 2.

In the hands of a bigoted, ambitious Clergy, and a ſuperſtitious, ſervile Laity, theſe extravagant criminations became an excellent engine for promoting the views of the popiſh church. The Prieſts of that church eagerly propagated the opinion, that all thoſe, who oppoſed their uſurpations and errors, were leagued with the Prince of darkneſs, and that hereſy and ſorcery were indiſſolubly united. (Delrio diſq. mag.) By this means many poor Waldenſes and other Proteſtants, ſuffered for the imputed ſin of witchcraft, when their abominable diſſent from the *holy* Church of Rome was their real crime. Truth indeed obliges me to confeſs that ſome Proteſtants have retorted the accuſation, and charged fifteen Popes in ſucceſſion from Silveſter II. to Gregory VII. with being Magicians.

fallen

fallen into, let us proceed with caution, and with diffidence in our own abilities. Becauſe we have been enabled to advance further in the inveſtigation of truth than our anceſtors, let us not imagine that we are endowed with any additional perfections. Conſcious that our judgment is circumſcribed, and our reaſon thwarted by the ſame infirmities and paſſions, ("for there is no new thing under the ſun") let us cultivate an affectionate regard for the prejudices and infirmities of others. Are we ourſelves ſtrong? It is our duty to bear with the weak. Have we been able to overcome the deluſion of any error? It is incumbent upon us to inſtruct others with ſincerity, with meekneſs, with gentleneſs and goodwill. And may the God of truth direct all our inveſtigations, and proſper all our endeavours, to the advancement of his glory and the happineſs of our fellow-creatures; ſo that, at the cloſe of our probation here, we may look back upon our paſt conduct with ſatisfaction, in joyful confidence that we ſhall receive his approbation.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

PSALM XXXI. 6.

I have hated them that regard lying Vanities; but I truſt in the Lord.

WHEN laſt I appeared before you, I endeavoured to add to what had already been advanced, every obſervation, which appeared to be of any conſiderable importance upon that intereſting ſubject, to which the peculiar circumſtances of our aſſembling more immediately directed our attention. Being therefore unexpectedly called upon once more to addreſs you from this place, on the ſame extraordinary topic, pardon me, if I indulge a confident hope that you will eaſily be

be induced to ſpare your cenſures, though this diſcourſe ſhould have little or nothing of novelty to recommend it. While however we in ſome meaſure re-trace the path we have already troden, ſome hitherto ſcarcely perceived object may perhaps preſent itſelf to our view, which may tend to increaſe and eſtabliſh our averſion to the lying vanities of vulgar ſuperſtition, and induce us with the Pſalmiſt to *hate* all thoſe who regard them.

To *hate* a fellow-creature! Who that has an heart poſſeſſing the ſmalleſt ſpark of humanity, does not ſhrink from the idea with a ſacred horror? And could the inſpired ſervant of God applaud, and by his own example recommend ſuch inveterate perſecuting malevolence? Surely this is impoſſible.—The language of the man after God's own heart appears to have been this,* "When

* This Pſalm appears to have been compoſed in the midſt of ſome preſſing difficulty, or rather immediately after ſome extraordinary deliverance. Why ſhould we not refer it to ſome of thoſe critical ſituations, to which David was reduced, when flying from the perſecuting malevolence of Saul, when ſo great was his danger, that without a ſignal interpoſition of Providence, his eſcape ſeemed almoſt impoſſible?

"involved

'involved in difficulties and diſtreſſes, I 'have not relied upon vain, ſuperſtitious 'obſervances, I have not conſulted any of 'the various tribe of prophane diviners; 'ſuch practices I have always regarded 'with abhorrence and the obſervers of 'them with deteſtation. But my confi-'dence has always been placed in the 'living God, and to him alone have I ap-'plied for direction.' He could not poſſibly be ignorant of the denunciations, which the law pronounced againſt the infamous practicers of idolatrous incantations, how then muſt he have been offended at all thoſe, who diſobediently confided in ſuch fooliſh deluſions; how muſt he have burned with indignation againſt all thoſe knaviſh impoſtors, who preyed upon the credulity of their weak brethren. For ſuch he muſt neceſſarily have conſidered all the pretenders to ſupernatural power and knowledge, when he ſtigmatiſed all their boaſted performances as "lying vanities." And every page of Scripture, when candidly examined, breathes the ſame ſpirit. It is in the ſame ſtrain of

pointed reprobation, that God addreſſes his choſen people: "Hearken not ye to "your prophets, nor to your diviners, "nor to your dreamers, nor to your in- "chanters, nor to your ſorcerers:—For "they prophecy a lie unto you."* By what ſtronger term could the exerciſers of ſuch arts be branded than that of lyars; or in what more pointed manner could their practice be marked as the ſole off-ſpring of human fraud and artifice? It muſt be acknowledged, that viewing them through the medium of prejudice and miſtranſlation, many ſincere and not weak believers have conceived the ſacred pages to ſpeak a different language. How laudable therefore every effort to draw aſide the veil which obumbrates their immaculate ſplendor, and purge them from thoſe blots, with which infidelity has, with too great appearance of reaſon, exultingly reproached them?

To what has been, with this deſign, laid before you on former occaſions, one

* Jer. xxvii. 9, 10. Compare Ch. xxix. 8, 9.

uſeful

uſeful obſervation may without impropriety be added. The ſcriptures more intent upon making men good than learned, have always accommodated their diction to the conceptions and prejudices of thoſe addreſſed. They give indeed to vain boaſters the appellations of prophets, diviners, magicians, witches, and the various other epithets, which ignorance has ever beſtowed, or knavery aſſumed. But this is no more a poſitive proof of their poſſeſſing anſwerable powers, than the corporeality of the Deity is evinced by ſuch expreſſions as, *the hand of God;* or the modern ſyſtem of natural philoſophy, which reſts on the adamantine baſis of demonſtration, is overthrown by Joſhua's ſaying, *the Sun ſtood ſtill.**

* A careful examination of thoſe paſſages of Scripture, where ſorceries and witchcrafts are mentioned, will be ſufficient to convince the unprejudiced, that nothing more is meant thereby, than ſome of the various modes of divination, practiſed by the idolatrous heathen, thoſe vain attempts to dive into futurity, which tended to alienate the heart from the true God. Compare 1 Sam. xv. 22, 23. 2 Kings, ix. 22. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6. Iſ. xlvii. 12, 13. Jer. xxvii. 9, 10. Ezek. xxi. 21, 22. Mich. v. 12, 13. Nahum iii. 4.

It would be almoſt culpable not to embrace this opportunity of making a remark upon the account of Simon of Samaria, which is tranſmitted to us in the Acts of the Apoſtles. "But there was a "certain man called Simon, which before "time in the ſame city uſed ſorcery, and "*bewitched* the people of Samaria, giving "out, that himſelf was ſome great one. "And to him they had regard, becauſe "that of a long time he had *bewitched* "them with ſorceries."*

Thoſe excellent men, to whom we are indeed exceedingly indebted for our tranſlation of the ſacred records, involuntarily drawn into an error by their own preconceived notions, have here repreſented as ſupernatural effects, thoſe *juggling tricks*, by which the artful impoſtor *aſtoniſhed* the ignorant Samaritans. For the original words imply no more, and it is rather ſingular, that they ſhould in one verſe have rendered the ſame verb

* Ch. viii. 9, &c.

bewitched,

bewitched,* which in another they have only tranſlated *wondered*, when deſcribing the effect, which the real miracles of Philip had upon Simon himſelf. " Then " Simon himſelf believed alſo, and when " he was baptized, he continued with " Philip and *wondered*, beholding the mi- " racles and ſigns which were done."

The principal evidence which reaſon furniſhes us with, in this curious and ſingular inveſtigation, has already been examined. The general concluſion which we have endeavoured to eſtabliſh, would be conſiderably ſtrengthened by a candid examination into the circumſtances of thoſe caſes, which have received the ſanction of different courts of juſtice, as indiſputable proofs of diabolical guilt. Theſe

* εξιστημι. It may not be improper to tranſcribe from the original, verſes, 9, 11, & 13. Ἀνὴρ δέ τις ὀνόματι Σίμων, προϋπῆρχεν ἐν τῇ πόλει μαγεύων καὶ ΕΞΙΣΤΩΝ το ἔθνος τῆς Σαμαρείας, λέγων εἶναί τινα ἑαυτὸν μέγαν.-----Προσεῖχον δὲ αὐτῷ, διὰ τὸ ἱκανῷ χρόνῳ ταῖς μαγείαις ΕΞΙΣΤΑΚΕΝΑΙ αυτὰς.-----Ὁ δὲ Σίμων καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπίστευσε, και βαπτισθεὶς ἦν προσκαρτερῶν τῷ Φιλίππῳ· θεωρῶν τε σημεῖα καὶ δυνάμεις μεγάλας γινομένας, ΕΞΙΣΤΑΤΟ. Vid. Smidium in Act. viii. 13.

again

again we might compare with others, where impoſture has been detected, or an heated and deranged imagination diſcovered.* This however, would be a taſk much more tedious than uſeful, and we may be ſufficiently convinced of their general abſurdity and iniquity, by conſidering the nature of the evidence, and the rules of judging, which ſuperſtition has in ſuch caſes uſually had recourſe to. Some of theſe are indeed too fanciful and fooliſh to bear a ſerious recital ;† but the iniquity

* See Scot's Diſcovery, Dr. Hutchinſon on Witchc. Ch. 4. & 15.

† A man may reaſonably doubt, whether he ſhould more indulge his indignation or laughter, to find ſuch ſilly teſts eſteemed adequate proofs of guilt, as, the accuſed parties not being able to repeat the Lord's Prayer without miſtakes; being outweighed by the Church Bible; ſwimming with thumbs and toes tied acroſs; being unable to ſhed tears; having the Devil's Mark, an apparent ſore rendered inſenſible of pain, and which might appear like the bite of a Flea; or ſecret Teats, (like Warts or Moles,) at which their imps were allowed to ſuck, an abſurd notion almoſt peculiar to this Country, where feeding and rewarding imps was made a capital Felony: theſe imps might appear, if their coming to take their accuſtomed repaſt was watched, in the ſhapes of Cats, Dogs, Rats, Mice, Birds, Flies, Toads, Fleas, &c. they might alſo be kept in pots

iniquity of others will ſcarcely allow them to be paſſed over unnoticed. While trials for the crime of witchcraft were faſhionable, it was deemed juſt to apply tortures to the accuſed wretches, or to afflict and harraſs them by want of food and privation of reſt, till from the diſordered and diſtracted mind ſomething was extorted, which appeared like a confeſſion of guilt. And if, when reſt and food had reſtored the underſtanding, this were denied, it was conſtrued into a proof of *diabolical* obſtinacy rather than a preſumption of innocence. On theſe trials the teſtimony of perſons was received, whoſe infamous characters rendered them incapable of being admitted as witneſſes in other caſes. Againſt one accuſed of any one particular act of ſorcery, any matter might be admitted in evidence, however foreign to the fact in queſtion, even though it had occurred at the moſt diſtant period. If the afflicted

pots or other veſſels, were they would ſtink deteſtably; ſo that if any poor accuſed wretche's houſe emitted a diſagreeable ſmell, it was a ſure ſign that imps were kept there, though theſe naſty elves could not be found. See Dalton's Country Juſtice.—King James's Dæmon.—Sad. debel—Bodin, &c.

party

party fancied he ſaw his ſuppoſed tormentors, it was eſteemed ſtrong proof againſt them: even the ill fame of a perſon's anceſtors was accounted a reaſonable cauſe of ſuſpicion; and to crown all, it was received as a maxim, that the eſtabliſhed practices of courts of judicature, when taking cognizance of this diabolical crime, were not to be examined and canvaſſed by reaſon. Before courts conſtituted upon theſe principles, and judges acting by theſe rules, what accuſed perſon could have the ſmalleſt hopes of vindicating his innocence? For there prejudice muſt triumph over reaſon; fancy uſurp the throne of judgement; ſuſpicion and proof, accuſation and conviction be completely confounded. Yet to the reſult of ſuch idle and iniquitous inveſtigations alone, can the advocate of theſe ſuperſtitious vanities appeal, in ſupport of their real and ſolid exiſtence. And with what heartfelt ſorrow muſt we add, for ſuch weak and wicked imputations, have thouſands of our fellow-creatures felt the agonizing ſcourge, periſhed on the accurſed tree,

or breathed out their ſpirit in the conſuming flames. Alas! ſuch are the baneful effects of ſuperſtition.

View the progreſs of this pernicious ſpirit, under whatever form and at whatever period, it has intruded itſelf amongſt the ſons of men, and it will ever be found the enemy of humanity, virtue and piety. It's inevitable tendency is to alienate the heart from God, to eſtabliſh a dependence upon idle ceremonies and vain obſervances. Wherever this hateful tyrant has been able to erect her throne, pure and undefiled religion has been driven into exile and oblivion. How is this lamentable truth confirmed, by the united teſtimony of every page of Pagan hiſtory! How is it confirmed, by a diſmal view of thoſe long protracted years of ignorance, when papal ſuperſtition triumphantly tyrannized over the weſtern world, almoſt extinguiſhing the pure light of revelation, and expelling divine truth from the regions of chriſtendom! But to paſt times we have ſcarce occaſion to appeal,

if we do but contemplate with attention the preſent ſtate of mankind. The knowledge and love of the true God appear juſt ſo far to have advanced their power and influence, as ignorance and ſuperſtition have been chaſed from the field. But what bitter ſenſations muſt ariſe in every philanthropic breaſt, to ſee how little progreſs has yet been made in the important work of enlightening and reforming mankind? Is it not almoſt enough to unnerve our efforts, when we conſider the mighty labours which are yet to be atchieved before this deſirable end is accompliſhed? Is it not almoſt ſufficient to ſink the moſt reſolute perſeverance in deſpair, when that tenacious obſtinacy is contemplated, with which long eſtabliſhed abſurdities are cheriſhed, as moſt valuable treaſures? Who can, without poignant emotion, behold intereſt and ambition inceſſantly, and but too ſucceſsfully, labouring to preſerve the empire of ignorance over the minds of the multitude? But ſurely the ſublimer motives of humanity and benevolence muſt be ſtrangers to the breaſt of him,

who

who can refuſe to lend his zealous aid, towards the extirpation of all "lying vani-"ties," if he but conſiders their baleful influence. Would he lead mankind to the ſervice of God, here let him commence his labours. Would he erect on earth the manſion of that "godlineſs, which has "the promiſe of the life, that now is, "and of that which is to come," here let him lay his foundation. The ſlave of bigoted prejudice, as well as the ſubject of impure paſſion, cannot poſſeſs that child-like ſimplicity, with which the apoſtle exhorts us, to receive "the ſincere milk of "the word, that we may" be nouriſhed, and "grow thereby." He muſt be void of that kind, long-ſuffering charity, without which, all his profeſſions are but "ſounding braſs, and a tinkling cymbal." This univerſally benevolent principle is incompatible with that perſecuting ſpirit, which can haraſs a brother for opinions ſake, or deſtroy him for fancifully imputed crimes.

But ſuch a ſpirit is the ſure offspring of ſuperſtition, that deſolating fiend, which, under the falſe title of wars of religion, has deluged the earth with blood, ſacrificed by whoſe tyranny the ſmoke of the army of martyrs has aſcended to heaven. This, this is the dæmon, which can rob us of our reaſon, and ſteel our hearts againſt the ſympathiſing calls of humanity, can arm us with the mad folly of brutes, and the unfeeling malice of furies. Then let man, in every ſtation and in every clime, raiſe his arm againſt this hideous enemy, let him exert all his powers to chaſe this dire deſtroyer from the face of the earth. Yes, let him baniſh this parent of "lying vanities, and truſt in the "Lord."

Methinks I hear ſome calm, cool objector ſay,—What, eradicate all at once thoſe ſuperſtitious notions, which ſerve to awe the ignorant, and frighten them into their duty, and will they not wildly ruſh into the paths of diſobedience?—With what painful conviction of the imperfection

tion of human nature, muſt every one, acquainted with man, acknowledge this ungrateful truth? Through a long ſeries of revolving ages, ſuperſtition nouriſhed by ignorance, and too often cultivated by knavery, has wide extended its dominion over the minds of men. With the bulk of the human race, if we entirely deprive them of this reſtraint, we leave the will uncontrouled, and the underſtanding a void, ready to be ſeized and tyrannized over by the firſt invading paſſion.

Then ſhould we ſtrive to eradicate by gradual culture, and the introduction of more pure and exalted motives, what it would be unſafe inſtantly to expel. It is thus that we muſt lay the foundation of all true regard and confidence in the great ſupreme, a confidence ſpringing from love and gratitude towards a gracious benefactor, not an homage generated by a fearful dread of an omnipotent Lord. For it is not as an arbitrary tyrant, that our God would be ſlaviſhly obeyed; but as a beneficent Father, that he would be willingly

willingly honoured. He is deſirous that all his creatures ſhould look up to him, as the being whoſe providential care and tender mercies pervade and preſerve the univerſe, that they ſhould place their dependence upon him, and not give to another any portion of that reſpect and honour, which is due to him alone.

The natural offspring of prevailing ſuperſtition is infidelity. Of the truth of this the preſent times afford us a lamentable example. Where ignorance and fear once ruled ſupreme, there has raſh philoſophy but too ſucceſsfully planted preſumption and atheiſm, 'Tis the diffuſion of pure and ſolid knowledge, which alone can preſerve us from the dominion of theſe oppoſite tyrants. How ſhould this conſideration increaſe our zeal and ſtimulate our endeavours! The immediate ſphere of our action may be circumſcribed, but our exertions will not on that account be entirely loſt. In that circumſcribed ſphere let us labour to root out every ſuperſti-

tious

tious lying vanity, and plant pure religion and unſophiſticated truth in its ſtead.

How charming, how enlivening to the ſoul, to gaze upon the dawning beams of opening light, to behold them irradiate that diſmal gloom of intellectual darkneſs, which long overwhelmed the millions of mankind: How ſupremely pleaſing, to view them wider and wider ſpreading their invigorating influence: How rapturouſly tranſporting, to contemplate the ſplendeſcent proſpect of pure and perfect day!

" Power ſupreme!
" O everlaſting King! to thee we kneel,
" To thee we lift our voice;"—

O ſpread thy benign, thy vivifying light over the dwellings of the ſons of men; diſpel the yet impending miſts of ignorance and ſuperſtition: And, O preſerve us from the diſmal gulph of infidelity and atheiſm; Let thy truth run and prevail glorioufly; let pure, celeſtial wiſdom overſpread the earth as the waters cover the

the ſea!—Then ſhall millions kneel before thee with grateful and enraptured hearts; then ſhall they rejoice to ſing the praiſes of thee, their Benefactor, their Father, and their God: Then ſhall this vale of tears be filled with the manſions of joy and gladneſs, and become a bliſsful foretaſte of thoſe regions, where thy ſaints, crowned with unfading glory and felicity, ſurround thy throne with never ceaſing hallelujahs!

FINIS.

THE MOST

STRANGE AND ADMIRABLE DISCOVERIE

OF THE

THREE WITCHES OF WARBOYS,

Arraigned, convicted, and executed,

At the laſt ASSIZES at HUNTINGDON,

For the bewitching of the Five Daughters of

ROBERT THROCKMORTON, Eſquire,

And divers other Perſons,

With ſundrie Divelliſh and grievous Torments:

AND ALSO FOR THE

Bewitching to Death of the Lady CRUMWELL,

The like hath not been heard of in this Age!

LONDON. 1593.
(For Thomas Man)

SUCH is the title-page of that curious narrative, an abridgement of which is here ſubmitted to the reader's peruſal. As far as could conveniently be done, the words of the original have been adopted, and are diſtinguiſhed by a ſingle inverted

It is embodied in Fuller's Richard Boulton's History of Wargrave, Sorcery, and Witchcraft (London, 1715), pp. 49-152. G. L. B.

verted comma. The ſingularity of the ſubject, rendered it almoſt impoſſible to forbear interſperſing a few obſervations, but it did not appear neceſſary to point theſe out by any particular mark of diſtinction; the diſcerning reader will eaſily diſcover them, and readily accede to them if juſt.

'About the 10th of November 1589, 'Miſtris *Jane*' one of the daughters of 'the ſaid Maſter *Throckmorton*, being neere 'the age of ten years, fell upon the ſodaine 'into a ſtrange kind of ſickneſs, the man-'ner whereof was as followeth. Sometimes 'ſhe would neeſe very lowde and thicke 'for the ſpace of halfe an houre together, 'and preſently as one in a great trance 'and ſwoune lay quietly as long: ſoone 'after ſhe would begin to ſwell and heave 'up her belly, ſo as none was able to keep 'her down: ſometime ſhe would ſhake one 'leg, and no other part of her, as if the 'paulſie had been in it; ſometime the 'other: preſently ſhe would ſhake one of 'her armes, and then the other; and ſoone after

'after her head, as if ſhe had been inflict-
'ed with the *running paulſie*.' In this manner ſhe had continued to be affected for ſeveral days, but without any ſuſpicion of witchcraft, when old *Alice Samuel* came to viſit the ſick child, and ſat down by the ſide of her in the chimney-corner, having a black knit cap on her head. This the child ſoon obſerved, and pointing at her, exclaimed, 'Grandmother, looke where 'the old witch ſitteth; did you ever ſee 'one more like a witch than ſhe is? Take 'off her blacke thrumb'd cap, for I cannot 'abide to looke on her.'

The child ſtill growing worſe rather than better, her parents ſent her urine to *Cambridge*, to Dr. *Barrow*, 'a man well 'known to be excellent ſkilful in phiſicke,' who, after repeatedly trying the effect of his preſcriptions, without ſucceſs, ventured to ſuggeſt, 'that he had ſome expe-'rience of the malice of ſome witches, and 'he verily thought that there was ſome 'kind of ſorcerie and witchcraft wrought 'towards this child.' This ſuggeſtion,

however, did not make any deep impreſſion upon the minds of her parents, 'until one juſt month after, (the very day 'and houre almoſt obſerved),' when two more of their daughters were ſeized with the ſame malady, and complained in the ſame manner of *Mother Samuel*. Soon afterwards the youngeſt daughter was ſeized, and laſt of all the oldeſt was reduced to the ſame ſituation, though ſtill more ſeverely handled than her younger ſiſters; they all however agreed, in placing all their afflictions to the account of old *Alice Samuel*.

It may not be ſuperfluous juſt to mention, that the ſame charge was brought againſt this old woman by the ſervants of Mr. *Throckmorton*, who, to the number of ſix, were at different periods afflicted in the ſame manner as his daughters.

To the ſceptic this may appear but weak evidence, but what objection can he make to the clear proof of guilt, which was furniſhed from the following experiment? In the month of February, ſucceeding

ceeding the commencement of this *lamentable tragedy*, theſe children were viſited by their uncle *Gilbert Pickering*, Eſq. who, on his firſt arrival at *Warboys*, found them all 'very well as children could be.' He then went, with others, to the houſe of mother *Samuel*, 'to perſuade her to come 'to ſee and to viſit the ſaide children;' but this reaſonable requeſt ſhe reſolutely refuſed,—undoubtedly from a conſciouſneſs of her guilt, and a fear leſt ſome clear proof of it ſhould be exhibited. But upon Mr. *Pickering*'s threatning to compel her, if ſhe refuſed to go of her own accord, ſhe at laſt complied, and was accompanied by her daughter *Agnes Samuel*, and one *Cicely Burder*, her ſuſpected confederates in this abominable witchcraft. No ſooner had ſhe 'entered the hall, where three of the 'childred were ſtanding by the fire per-'fect well, but at one moment, they all 'fell down upon the ground ſtrangely 'tormented, ſo that if they had been let 'lie ſtill on the ground, they would have 'leaped and ſprung like a *quicke pickerel*, '*newly taken out of the water*.' Almoſt immediately

immediately one of them, *Jane Throckmorton* was taken up, carried into another room, and laid upon a bed, the covering of which ſhe ſoon begun to ſcratch, repeatedly crying out, 'Oh that I had her, 'Oh that I had her.' Mr. *Pickering*, ſurprized at this, fetched mother *Samuel*, ('who came as willingly as a beare to the 'ſtake'), to the child's bed-ſide, and deſired her to put her hand to the child's, but ſhe refuſed, though encouraged by the example both of Mr. *Pickering*, and others, whoſe hands, however, 'the child would 'ſcarce touch, much leſs ſcratch.'

At length, 'without any malice to the 'woman, confidence or opinion in ſcratch-'ing, (only to taſte, by this experiment, 'whereto the child's words would tend) 'he took mother *Samuel*'s hand, and thruſt 'it to the child's hand, who no ſooner felt 'the ſame, but preſently ſhe ſcratched her 'with ſuch vehemence, that her nayles 'brake into ſpilles, with the force and 'earneſt deſire ſhe had to revenge.' In the midſt of her rage, Mr. *Pickering* covered

vered the old woman's hand with his own; yet the child would not ſcratch his hand, but 'felt eagerly for that which ſhe miſſ-'ed,' and mourned bitterly at the diſappointment. All this time not only her eyes were cloſed, but her face was alſo turned from Mr. *Pickering*, and his companions, and hid in the boſom of the perſon who held her down upon the bed.—How then was it poſſible for her to diſtinguiſh the hands preſented to her, except by the direction of the evil ſpirit, which poſſeſſed her? Unleſs indeed we have recourſe to the *extravagant* opinion, that *ſhe could be directed by the motions and whiſperings of the company about her, or could be able to diſtinguiſh by the touch, the ſhrivelled hand of an old woman from that of any other perſon.*

The preſence and agency of an evil ſpirit were evinced by repeated occurrences. For generally when ever prayers commenced before theſe children, the wicked ſpirit would ſhew its reſentment, by tormenting them, but would 'inſtantly be quiet, as ſoon as prayer end-'ed;'

'ed;' even grace before or after meat it would ſeldom hear with patience, or ſuffer family prayer to paſs over in peace, though the children were removed into another room. The ſame was the caſe, when 'any one read the Bible, or any 'other godly book, before them;' and not unfrequently at the mention of 'any 'word that tended to God, or godlineſs, 'the ſpirit raged all one as if any read or 'prayed by them.' One particular inſtance the reader will excuſe our inſerting. When one of theſe children was in her fit, a perſon preſent 'chanced to aſk her, or rather 'the ſpirit in her: Love you the word of 'God? whereat ſhe was ſore troubled and 'vexed. But love you witchcraft? it 'ſeemed content. Or love you the Bible? 'again it ſhaked her. But love you Pa-'piſtrie? it was quiet. Love you prayer? 'it raged. Love you the Maſſe? it was 'ſtill. Love you the Goſpel? againe it 'heaved up her bellie: ſo that what good 'thing ſoever you named, it miſliked; but 'whatſoever concerning the *Pope's paltrie*, 'it ſeemed pleaſed and pacified.' At the ſame

ſame time this evil ſpirit, or ſpirits, would allow theſe children, with apparent pleaſure, ‘ to play at cards, or any other fool-‘ iſh game,’ with ſome *one* they might pick out of the company, and whom they would ſee and converſe with, though unable to ſee or hear *any one elſe*. For ſuch was the ſingular variety of their afflictions, that ſometimes they would be totally inſenſible, ſometimes they would be able to ſee and hear, but not to ſpeak; ſometimes to hear and ſpeak, though not to ſee; and ſometimes to ſee and converſe with particular perſons, though completely inſenſible of the preſence or converſation of any other perſon. Nor were the modes of relieving them from their diſtreſſing ſituation leſs ſingular; if carried into the open air, to ſome particular place, or in ſome particular direction, they would recover; but if returned to their former place or ſituation, they would immediately relapſe. When in their fits, the children themſelves, *(or rather the ſpirits)* would frequently predict their own recovery, at a certain time, upon being conveyed to a

certain place, or upon the performance of a certain ceremony, *which predictions were uniformly verified by the event.*—The unbelieving ſceptic may perhaps conſider ſome of theſe circumſtances, as ſtronger indications of *human* deluſion or knavery, than of extraordinary *ſpiritual* agency. But ſhould we corroborate the fact by half the curious inſtances the original furniſhes us with, this narrative would be ſwelled to an extravagant ſize; and more *important* matter claims our attention.

After theſe children had, for ſome time, ſuffered in this extraordinary manner, in the month of March, 1590, they were viſited by the Lady of Sir *Henry Cromwel:* 'She had not long ſtaid in the houſe, ere 'they all fell into their fits,' *(an occurrence which invariably took place whenever any ſtrangers came to ſee them)* 'and were ſo 'grievouſly tormented, that it pitied that 'good Ladies heart to ſee them: Where-'upon ſhe cauſed mother *Samuel* to be 'ſent for;' and, taking her aſide, ſhe 'charged her deeply with this witchcraft,

'uſing

'uſing alſo ſome hard ſpeeches to her,
'but ſhe ſtifly denyed them all, ſaying,
'That Maſter *Throckmorton*, and his wife,
'did her much wrong, ſo to blame her
'without cauſe.' Lady *Cromwel*, unable
'to prevail with her by good ſpeeches,
'ſodainly pulled off her kercher, and ta-
'king a paire of ſheeres, clipped off a
'locke of her haire, and gave it privily
'to Miſtreſs *Throckmorton*, together with
'her hair-lace, willing her to burn them.'
Perceiving herſelf ſo ill uſed, ſhe ſaid to
the Lady: '*Madam, why do you uſe me*
'*thus? I never did you any harm as yet.*'
'The ſame night, Ladie *Cromwel* was
'ſtrangely tormented in her ſleep by a
'cat, (as ſhe imagined) which mother
'*Samuel* had ſent unto her, which cat of-
'fered to plucke off all the ſkin and fleſh
'from her armes and bodie.'—Was it ſo
extraordinary that ſhe ſhould have ſuch a
dream, conſidering what work ſhe had
been engaged in during the day?—'Not
'long after the Ladie fell very ſtrangely
'ſicke, and ſo continued unto her dying
'day, which was ſome year and quarter

'after her being at Warboyſe. The 'manner of her fits was much like to the 'childrens, and that ſaying of mother '*Samuel*, (*Madam, I never hurt you as yet*) 'would never out of her mind.'—The reſt of the evidence, upon which the three *Samuels* were condemned for bewitching this Lady to death, will appear in the courſe of this hiſtory.

Such multifarious wickedneſs was too much for one ſpirit alone to perform; old mother *Samuel*, therefore, and her aſſociates, had no leſs than nine at their command. The names of the firſt ſix were, '*Pluck*, *Blue*, *Catch*, *White*, *Calico*, and '*Hardname*, (for his name ſtandeth upon 'eight letters, and every letter ſtandeth 'for a word),' and that of the other three, *Smack*, they being couſins: for be it known that relationſhip exiſts even amongſt the inhabitants of the nether regions. The favourite form, under which they appeared before thoſe, to whom they came to pay their unwelcome viſits, was that of *dun chickens*.

We

We ſhall omit many *wonders* which happened previous to that ſeaſon, but we cannot forbear mentioning, that, 'towards 'Hollantide,' (probably Hallowmas, or All-Saints Day) 1592, 'the ſpirits grew 'very familiar with the children,' *(a moſt natural conſequence of long acquaintance)* 'and would frequently talk with them 'halfe an hour together, and ſometimes 'longer.' The general ſubjects of their converſation were mother *Samuel*, whom they honoured with the appellation of *Dame*, and charged with being their employer; and the children's fits, when they ſhould come out of them, when they ſhould fall into them again, and of what nature they ſhould be.

But they did not always confine themſelves to theſe topics, as the following ſpecimens will evince. The oldeſt of theſe afflicted damſels, being one evening in her fit, thus addreſſed the viſitant ſpirit: 'From whence come you, Maſter *Smack*, 'and what newes doe you bring? The 'ſpirite anſwered, that hee came from 'fighting,

'fighting. From fighting, ſayth ſhe, 'with whom, I pray you? The ſpirite 'anſwered, with *Pluck*. Where did you 'fight, I pray you, ſayd ſhe? The ſpirite 'anſwered, in his old Dame's back-houſe, 'and they fought with great cowlſtaves, 'this laſt night. And who got the maſte-'rie, I pray you, ſaid ſhe? He anſwered, 'that he broke *Pluck*'s head. Saith ſhe, I 'would that he had broke your necke alſo. 'Saith the ſpirite, is that all *the thanks I 'ſhall have for my labour?* Why, ſaith 'ſhe, do you look for thanks at my hands? 'I would you were all hanged up one a-'gainſt another, and your Dame and all, 'for you are all nought. So he departed, 'and bad her farewell,' promiſing to come again on Wedneſday. Immediately afterwards came *Pluck* himſelf, hanging down his head, and acknowledged his unfortunate diſcomfiture.

The next day ſhe was viſited by Mr. *Catch*, who came limping, and complained that *Smack* had broken his leg; but he threatened to 'be even with him before 'he

'he had done. Then ſayd ſhe, Put forth 'your other legge, let me ſee if I can 'breake that alſo; for ſhee had a ſtick in 'her hand: The ſpirit tolde her that ſhe 'could not hit him: Can I not hit you, 'ſayd ſhe? let me trie. Then the ſpirite 'put out his legge, for ſhe lifted up her 'ſtick eaſily, and ſodaynely gave a great 'ſtroake upon the ground. You have not 'hurt me, ſayd the ſpirit. Have I not 'hurt you, ſayd ſhe? but I would if I 'could, for then would I make ſome of 'you come ſhorte home. So ſhe ſeemed 'divers times to ſtrike at the ſpirit, but 'he leaped over the ſticke, as ſhe ſayd, as 'if it had been a *Jack an apes*. So after 'many ſuch toyes uſed between them, 'the ſpirit departed, and ſhe came forth 'of her fit, continuing all that night, and 'the next day very ſicke, and *full of payne 'in her legs*.' The following evening after ſupper, Maſter *Blue* paid her a viſit, with his arm in a ſling, which he ſaid had been broken for him by the doughty hero *Smack;* yet he threatened that they would one day fall upon him all together, and take

take ample revenge for every injury. The day after ſhe 'fell into a fenceleſs fit,' (not recogniſing any perſon preſent;) 'Anon, 'fetching a great ſigh, ſhe ſaid, Who ſent 'for you, Maſter *Smack?* He made an- 'ſwer, that he was come according to his 'promiſe which he made unto her on Sun- 'daie at night. Belike, ſaid ſhe, you 'will keep promiſe, but I had rather you 'would keep awaie, and come when I ſend 'for you: but what news have you 'brought? I told you that I had been a 'fighting the laſt Sundaie night, but I 'have had manie battles ſince. Yea, ſo it 'ſeemeth, ſaith ſhe, for here was both '*Pluck*, *Catch*, and *Blew*, and they all 'came maimed unto me: But I marvel 'that you could beat them, they are very 'great, and you are but a little one. Said 'he, I am good enough for two of the 'beſt of them together. But, ſayd ſhe, I 'can tell you news: They will all at one 'time fall upon you, and beat you. He 'ſaid, he cared not for that, he would beat 'two of them, and his couſin *Smacks* 'would help him to beat the other two.'

For

(For *Hardname* was alſo of the party). 'In 'the end, the ſpirit ſayde, You ſhall have 'no more ſuch fits as you have had. No, 'ſayd ſhe, that is well; but you can doe 'nothing but lye. Why, ſayd hee, will 'you not beleeve me? No, ſayd ſhe, ſhall 'I beleeve the Divel, who is the Father 'of all lyes? I pray God it be true, but 'whether it be true, or not, I care not a 'ruſh for you. No, ſayd he, will you 'not *thank me?* Thank you, ſayd ſhe, 'hang you and all your fellowes, for I 'will not beleeve you no farther than I 'ſee you, neither do I care for any of you 'all.'—Such abſurd dialogues, of which the narrative affords a numerous collection, ſuch ſilly ravings of a diſordered imagination require no comment.

It ought not to be forgot, that this *Smack* was peculiarly attached to this young lady, and ſtrove to gain her affections by fair promiſes and kind uſage: and it was on her account that he had thoſe gallant battles with the leſs enamoured ſpirits, whom he beat ſo unmer-

cifully, becauſe they perſiſted in tormenting her. The cenſorious critic may perhaps ſay, with a ſneer, *And is it ſuch an extraordinary miracle, that love ſhould occupy the thoughts of a young lady of eighteen?*

Soon after this familiarity commenced between the ſpirits and the children, the former began more manifeſtly to accuſe mother *Samuel*, and to ſay, ere long they 'would bring her to confeſſion or confuſion. The old woman reſided now entirely at Mr. *Throckmorton*'s houſe; for, contrary to the uſual cuſtom in ſuch caſes, ('*but* '*there is no certainty in Sathan*),' her preſence was a ſure relief to the children. This, however, continued only for a time, for mother *Samuel* getting at length an opportunity ' to feed her ſpirits, and ' make a new league and compoſition ' with them,' her preſence became of no avail. Yet Mr. Throckmorton retained her at his houſe, ' becauſe the children, ' being in their fits, could neither heare, ' ſee, nor ſpeake to any body elſe, and ' ſome of them could take nothing, but

' that

'that which ſhee either gave them or 'touched with her hands.'

And now the children were continually teazing the old woman to confeſs herſelf guilty, affirming, that the ſpirits told them, 'they would ſoon enforce her to 'confeſs, in deſpight of herſelf,' if ſhe would not do it voluntarily: They encouraged her by promiſes of forgiveneſs, to which their father and friends aſſented; they entreated her with tears, ſaying, that by this means ſhe would certainly relieve them, and reſtore them to perfect health; they alſo ſet before her the ſevere puniſhment which ſhe would inevitably meet with both in this world and the next, if ſhe obſtinately perſiſted in her wickedneſs. Her general anſwer was, 'That ſhe 'would doe for them all the good ſhe 'could, but for confeſſion of this matter, 'ſhe would not, for it was a thing ſhe 'never knew of, nor conſented unto.'

A few days before Chriſtmas, one of theſe children was attacked with a more

violent fit than any of them had before experienced, yet ſhe was threatened by the ſpirit with one ſtill more terrible. Mother *Samuel*, who was preſent, was ſo affected with the ſight, that 'ſhe many 'times prayed ſhe might never ſee the 'like agayne in any of them.' At the ſame time the children entreated her to confeſs, 'that they might be well, and 'keep a merry Chriſtmas;' and their father alſo ſeconded their entreaties, but in vain. He then requeſted Mother *Samuel* to charge the ſpirit, that his daughter might eſcape the fit with which ſhe was threatened. 'She preſently ſaid, I charge thee, 'ſpirit, *in the name of God*, that Miſtris '*Jane* never have this fit. The child 'ſitting by, ſayd, truely the thing ſaith, 'I thank God, that I ſhall never have this 'fit that he hath foretold me of.' Again, at the father's requeſt, the old woman charged the ſpirit, *in the ſame manner*, to leave all the children immediately, and never return to them again; ſcarce had ſhe uttered the words, before three of them, 'who were then in their fits, and

'had

'had ſo continued for the ſpace of three 'weeks, wiped their eyes, and inſtantly 'ſtood upon their legges, being as well 'as ever they were in their lives.'

Mother *Samuel*, as ſoon as ſhe perceived this, fell on her knees before Mr. *Throckmorton*, intreating him to forgive her, and confeſſing, that ſhe was the cauſe of all this trouble to his children. The next day, ſhe confirmed this confeſſion publicly in the church, and in the evening was permitted by Mr. *Throckmorton* to go home to her huſband and daughter.

Towards the evening of the following day, Mr. *Throckmorton* received information, 'that his new convert had revolted againe, 'and had denied all that ſhe had ſpoken 'to him;' he therefore went immediately to her, and threatened to take her before the juſtices, if ſhe retracted her former confeſſion, but his threats proved ineffectual. The next morning he ſent for her again, and ſhe ſtill perſiſting in the denial of her guilt, he gave the conſtables

ſtables charge of her and her daughter, to take them before the Biſhop of Lincoln. Alarmed at this, the old woman once more offered to confeſs to Mr. *Throckmorton in private*, though very averſe to doing ſo *in public*. On the ſame day, the 26th of December 1592, ſhe was taken to *Buckden*, where, upon examination before the Biſhop of Lincoln, ſhe confeſſed, 'That a dun chicken did frequently ſuck 'on her chin, before it came to Mr. '*Throckmorton*'s houſe, and that the ill and 'the trouble which had come to his chil-'dren, had come by means of the ſaid 'dun chicken, which ſhe knew was then 'both gone *from them and from her*.'

On the 29th, ſhe was again examined before the Biſhop, and two Juſtices of the Peace, when ſhe ſaid, 'That ſhe never 'did hurt *to any*, *ſaving to the children in 'queſtion;* that ſhe knew the ſaid dun 'chicken was gone from the children, be-'cauſe the ſaid dun chicken, with the reſt, 'were come *into her*, and were then in 'the bottom of her bellie, and made her

ſo

'ſo full, that ſhe could ſcant lace her cote,
'and that on the way as ſhe came, they
'weighed ſo heavy, that the horſe ſhee
'rid on did fall downe, and was not able
'to carrie her,' that ſhe had received theſe ſpirits from an upright man, whoſe name ſhe did not know. She then went, by the direction of her examiners, into another room, and 'there with a loud voice, ſaid
'theſe words as followeth, *O thou divel, I*
'*charge thee in the name of the Father, the*
'*Son, and the Holy Ghoſt, that thou tel me*
'*the name of the upright man which gave me*
'*the divels:* which thing ſhe did three
'times, and then returned, ſaying, that
'the ſpirits had tolde her his name was
'*Langland.*' In the ſame manner ſhe inquired, where he dwelt; and the anſwer returned was, 'That he had no dwelling.' To the queſtion, where *Langland* then was, it was anſwered, 'that he went the
'laſt voyage beyond the ſeas.' After ſhe had confeſſed theſe, and many other things of a ſimilar nature, Mother *Samuel* was committed, along with her daughter, to the goal of Huntingdon.

Upon

Upon the peruſal of theſe confeſſions, many will be ready to embrace the opinion of thoſe, whom the author of the original narrative cenſures, becauſe, 'thinking themſelves wiſe,' they did not heſitate to ſay, 'that this Mother *Samuel* in 'queſtion, was an olde ſimple woman, and 'that one might make her by fayre words 'confeſs what they would.' It will not eſcape their obſervation,—that ſhe never confeſſed herſelf guilty, till after ſhe had been aſſailed by reiterated ſolicitations, ſoothed by promiſes, and alarmed by threats. The ſpirits had alſo *predicted* her confeſſion, and ſhe muſt have obſerved how regularly *their predictions were accompliſhed.* She ſaw the children relieved from their diſtreſſing ſituation at her command. All theſe circumſtances muſt have had an aſtoniſhing effect upon a feeble and ſuperſtitious mind, ſo that, we need not wonder, if at length they cauſed her not only to ſuſpect herſelf, but abſolutely to conceive herſelf in league with the devil.

At

At the quarter ſeſſions (January 9, 1593) following the commitment of *Agnes Samuel*, and her mother, Mr. *Throckmorton* requeſted the 'High Sheriff and the Juſtices to baile this maide, and to have her home to his houſe, to ſee whether any ſuch evidences of guiltineſs would appear againſt her, as had before appeared in the children againſt her mother.' After ſome demur his requeſt was granted, and *Agnes Samuel* accompanied him home. A few days after ſhe was brought thither, the children fell 'all of them a freſh into their fits, and then the ſpirits did begin as plainly to accuſe the daughter, as ever they did the mother, and to tell the children, that the old woman hath ſet over her ſpirits to her daughter, and that ſhe hath bewitched them all over agayne.' I ſhall forbear enumerating the various ſevere ſcratchings which ſhe underwent from each of the children at different times, every *particular circumſtance of which was invariably foretold by the ſpirits;* eſpecially as ſuch *ſtronger* proofs of her guilt were exhibit-

ed. For when ſhe had been almoſt a month at Mr. *Throckmorton*'s, one of the children was told by the ſpirit, when in her fit, that they ſhould any of them 'be 'preſently well,' whenever *Agnes Samuel* ſhould ſay, '*I charge thee, divel, as I love* '*thee, and am a witch, and guiltie of this* '*matter, that thou ſuffer this childe to be* '*well at preſent.*' This was repeatedly tried before a great variety of witneſſes, and was always attended with inſtant ſucceſs, though theſe words had not the leaſt effect when ſpoken by any other perſon.

The ſpirits alſo told the children afterwards, of other charges, by which her guilt was made ſtill more clear, ſuch as, '*I charge thee, divel, as I am a witch, and* '*a worſer witch than my mother, and con-* '*ſenting to the death of* LADIE CRUMWEL:' and, '*As I have bewitched Mrs. Pickering* '*of Ellington*, (an aunt of theſe children) '*ſince my mother confeſſed;*' and again, '*As* '*I would have bewitched Miſtris Joan* '*Throckmorton to death.*'

The

The effect of theſe three charges, or charms, was repeatedly proved by different people, and even by the *Judge himſelf*, on the day before the trial of the culprits. For whenever *Agnes Samuel* called any one of theſe children out of her fit by one of theſe charges, *(particularly if any ſtrangers were preſent)* ſhe would almoſt immediately fall into another, and after being relieved from that, into a third, till the three charges had been ſucceſſively proved effectual.

Laſt of all, the ſpirits began to accuſe *John Samuel* the father, as they had before done the mother and daughter. They appealed to a charge, or charm, like the preceding ones, as a clear proof of the truth of their accuſation; but from the perverſity of circumſtances, and the obſtinacy of the old man, this was only once proved previous to the trial of theſe three delinquents.

On the 5th of April 1593, theſe three *wicked* offenders, *John Samuel*, *Alice Samuel*,

and *Agnes* their daughter, were arraigned before Mr. Juſtice *Fenner*, 'for bewitching of the Ladie *Cromwel* to death; and 'for bewitching of Miſtreſs *Joane Throckmorton*, Miſtris *Jane Throckmorton*, and 'others;' when 'Maſter *Dorrington*, Doctor 'of Divinitie, and parſon of the town of 'Warboyſe, *Thomas Nut*, Maſter of Arte, 'and vicar of Ellington,' the father of theſe afflicted children, and others of their relations, appeared as evidence againſt them. By theſe the before related 'proofs, preſumptions, circumſtances, and 'reaſons,' with many others of the ſame ſpecies, 'were at large delivered, untill 'both the Judge, Juſtices, and Jury ſaid 'openly, that the cauſe was moſt apparant; their conſciences were well ſatisfied, that the ſayd witches were guiltie, and had deſerved death.' As to *John Samuel*, *occular* proof of his guilt was exhibited in court. For amongſt the reſt 'Miſtriſs *Jane Throckmorton* was 'brought into court,' and there, in her fit, unable to ſpeak, or ſee any one, though 'her eyes were open,' ſhe was ſet

before

before the Judge, who was told that there was a charm, which 'if old *Samuel* would 'ſpeake, the ſayd *Jane* ſhould be well.' In conſequence of which information, he was requeſted by the Judge to repeat the charm, but this he poſitively refuſed to do, till threatened, that if he perſiſted in his obſtinate refuſal, 'the court would 'hold him guiltie of the crimes whereof 'he was accuſed.' Intimidated by this threat, he at length complied, 'and ſaid, 'in the hearing of all that were preſent, '*As I am a witch, and did conſent to the* '*death of Ladie* CROMWELL, *ſo I charge* '*thee divell, to ſuffer Miſtriſs* JANE *to* '*come out of her fit at this preſent.*' Which words being no ſooner ſpoken by 'the old 'witch, but the ſaid Miſtris *Jane*, as her 'accuſtomed order was, wiped her eyes, 'and came out of her fit.' The Judge immediately obſerved, '*You ſee all ſhee is* '*now well, but not with the muſicke of Da-*'*vid's harpe.*'—We muſt not forget, that the ſpirit had *previouſly told this* Miſtris *Jane*, when ſhe was firſt ſeized, on the 16th of March, 'that ſhe ſhould never

'come

'come out of her fit, until old father *Samuel* had pronounced theſe wordes.'

When the Judge, previous to paſſing of ſentence, aſked Mother *Samuel* the uſual queſtion, What have you to ſay for yourſelf, why ſentence of death ſhould not be pronounced upon you? She anſwered, that *ſhe was with child.* Such a plea from a woman of near eighty years of age, excited the laughter of all preſent, and the old woman 'laughed herſelf more 'than any other.'—Could a ſtronger proof of her dotage or inſanity be poſſibly exhibited?

At the place of execution, old *Alice Samuel* again confeſſed her guilt, and that her huſband was her aſſociate in theſe *wicked* proceedings, though he reſolutely denied it to the laſt. Her daughter ſhe ſtrenuouſly exculpated, who as warmly aſſerted her own innocence; 'but being 'willed to ſay the Lord's prayer and the 'creed, when, as ſhe ſtood upon the lad-

'der

'der readie to be executed, ſhe ſayd the 'Lord's prayer, until ſhe came to ſay, *but* '*deliver us from evil*, the which ſhe could 'by no means pronounce; and in the 'creed ſhe miſſed very much, and could 'not ſay, *that ſhe believed in the Catholic* '*church*.'—A circumſtance amply ſufficient to convince every one that ſhe could not poſſibly be *innocent*.

To this narrative, ſo fertile in 'proofs, 'preſumptions, circumſtances, and rea-'ſons,' we ſhall add no further obſervation, though it furniſhes ſuch an ample field for comment, fully perſuaded, that its *conſiſtency*, *clearneſs*, and *probability* are ſufficient to remove every doubt and heſitation from the mind of the reader.

FINIS.